

“IT WAS OUR LIVES, THAT WAS WHAT WE BELIEVED”: INDIGENOUS HISTORIES
OF CATHOLICISM IN NORTHWEST SASKATCHEWAN

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the variety of ways that Indigenous people in Patuanak (a Dene First Nation) and Ile-a-la-Crosse (a predominantly Cree/Metis village) in northwestern Saskatchewan have negotiated Catholicism from 1846 to the present, and the changing ways that they understand this history within their historical consciousness. This work contributes to a growing body of critical ethnohistory and Indigenous studies scholarship that focuses on Indigenous knowledge and suggests the complicated ways that Indigenous people have encountered colonial systems, while drawing attention to the need for scholars to make space for Indigenous Christianity beyond histories of conversion and the roles of the Christian Churches in the Canadian Indian Residential School system. This dissertation suggests the significance of Catholicism during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in northwestern Saskatchewan as necessary to understand processes and local experiences of colonialism, decolonization, and reconciliation. It considers how positionality and life history inform the variety of ways that people have historically negotiated their understandings of Indigeneity and Catholicism, and what it means to belong to a Catholic community. This work draws primarily on interviews that the author conducted with community members, and makes a methodological contribution in its effort to be more transparent about the research process throughout the written work. Chapters two and three focus on stories of Willow Heart, a Dene woman who helped the oblate priests and is considered to be a prophet. Stories of Willow Heart are used as an entrée to discuss local understandings of the Riel Resistance in 1885 and the 1906 Treaty Ten/Scrip Commission. Chapters four and five consider stories of Father Louis Moraud, an oblate priest in the region from 1916-1965 who is considered by many Elders as a local saint. In chapters six and seven, stories of decolonization within historically Catholic communities are discussed, focusing on the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Church during the 1970s, as well as local efforts to revitalize sweat lodges and the continuing significance omission of the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA).

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ABBREVIATIONS

BIRS	Beauval Indian Residential School
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CURA	Community University Research Alliance
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
DNS	Department of Northern Saskatchewan
GDI	Gabriel Dumont Institute
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
IAP	Independent Assessment Process
IRS	Indian Residential School
IRSSA	Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement
MBC	Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation
MLTC	Meadow Lake Tribal Council
MNC	Métis National Council
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSS	Metis Society of Saskatchewan
NDP	New Democratic Party
NRCTR	National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
OTC	Office of the Treaty Commissioner
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Chapter One: Introduction

“If you tell a story to a priest, they won’t believe it, and then when they talk to us they say, ‘you didn’t see it but you have to believe’...Maybe that’s why people slack down, I think. Because when we tell somebody, the white man, somebody asks us questions or we tell a story, they won’t believe what happened.”¹

-Jacob Estralshenan²

“When you don’t know the story before the story, sometimes it doesn’t come out. It comes out, but not in the way it started.”³

-Tony Durocher

For over 170 years in what is now northwestern Saskatchewan, the Oblates Of Mary Immaculate (OMI) have admonished Indigenous parishioners to believe in Catholic stories about God, creation, sin, Hell, miracles, saints, Mary, and Jesus. For just as long the Indigenous people of the region, Dene, Cree, and Metis have continued to communicate their own stories of the creator, creation, powerful medicine men and women, conflicts and allegiances, traditions, miracles, and even the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁴ For some Indigenous residents, these two sets of stories are

¹ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013. For a more detailed introduction to Jacob and my work with him, see Appendix A.

² Jacob has been interviewed several times, though each time his last name is spelled differently. In 2006 he was interviewed for the Office of the Treaty Commission’s *In Their Own Land: Treaty Ten and the Canoe Lake, Clear Lake, and English River Bands*, and his name is provided as Jacob Est. That same year, he was interviewed for the Meadow Lake Tribal Council’s collection of Elder stories, where his name is listed as Jacob Estrosinaire. Jacob passed away on January 14th, 2015. In his obituary, his name is spelled Jacob Antoine Estralshenan, and his wife and other family members’ last names are listed as Est. On his consent form for our interview, his last name is not legible in his signature. For consistency in this dissertation, I will be using his last name as listed in his obituary.

³ Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014. For a more detailed introduction to Tony and my work with him, see Appendix A.

⁴ Throughout this dissertation I use the more inclusive term Indigenous to include the Metis, Dene and Cree peoples with whom I have worked. Metis studies scholar and sociologist Chris Andersen draws on Jose R. Martinez Cobo’s (1987) description of Indigenous, that Anderson explains “emphasizes historical continuity with pre-colonial or pre-settler societies – not continuity with a pre-contact presence, occupation, or ownership.” In my work Metis refers to a post-contact Indigenous group. I use terms Cree, Metis and Dene to refer to specific cultural groups while recognizing the many kinship ties between these groups. The term First Nation is used to discuss Indigenous groups with Indian status, such as the English River First Nation, and differentiations between First Nation and Metis in this context are along status lines. My decision not to use the acute accent over the “e” in Metis follows Metis studies scholar Brenda Macdougall’s lead, and explanation that it is more inclusive and emphasizes more of an Indigenous identity. In her study of Metis culture during the nineteenth century at Ile-a-la-Crosse, Macdougall justifies her choice of the unaccented “Metis” that “signifies that the term is being used to encompass all mixed-descent people in the English River District. The use of the unaccented word is meant to denote mixed-descent people who created communities for themselves that were separate and distinct from both their Indian and European ancestors, regardless of their association with fur companies or European/Euro-Canadian paternity...Furthermore, using “Métis” I believe, privileges their Frenchness over their Aboriginal heritages or alternative European lineages.” Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p. 260. Chris Andersen, *“Métis”: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), p. 16.

mutually exclusive; for others they are inclusive of one another. Catholicism has become a meaningful part of some Indigenous peoples' histories, communities, and identities, while others see Catholicism as an expression of colonialism that needs to be disrupted in order to regain the beliefs, traditions, and stories their communities held before the arrival of the priests - those aspects of lives that many priests and the residential school system sought to erase. Historian John Sutton Lutz, having recognized "that the first and ongoing contacts between Native and stranger were spiritual encounters as well as material ones," has called for a rethinking of contact history in which the metaphysical is taken seriously.⁵ Following Lutz's lead, in this dissertation I move beyond an examination of missionary attempts at conversion and associated Indigenous responses, to focus on the how Catholicism has been negotiated within Indigenous historical consciousness. This approach provides me with an historiographical entrée and intellectual rationale to take Elder Jacob Estralshenan's stories seriously, and to heed Elder Tony Durocher's call to consider the "story before the story." This dissertation is not a history of missionization,⁶ nor is it an account of resistance and renewal,⁷ but rather an effort to engage with Indigenous

⁵ John Sutton Lutz, "First Contact as a Spiritual Performance: Encounters on the North American West Coast," in *Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, edited by John Sutton Lutz (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), p. 45. Lutz's call to take spirituality seriously relates to anthropologist Sergei Kan's observation that "where missionary writings are the only documents dealing with Native American Christianity, it is difficult to ascertain the depth of the native commitment to Christian dogma and ritual. A scholar who writes in the currently popular "narrative-of-resistance" mode is likely to interpret native conversion as "superficial" (e.g., Devens 1992). Such an interpretation may also appeal to some of the more radical Native American activists and intellectuals. However, it carries the danger of reading contemporary attitudes and intellectual fads into the historical record," Sergei Kan, "Clan Mothers to Godmothers: Tlingit Women and Russian Orthodox Christianity, 1840-1940," *Ethnohistory* 43, 4 (1996): p. 631. This also relates to a scholarly preoccupation with Indigenous conversion and debates over the term syncretism. See for example, Axtell, "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?" in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (Oxford University Press USA: New York, 1988); Kenneth Mills, "The Limits of Religious Coercion in Mid-Colonial Peru," *Past and Present* 145 (November 1994): 116; Amanda Fehr and MacKinley Darlington, "Encountering Mary: Apparitions, Roadside Shrines, and the Métis of the Westside," *Saskatchewan History* (2009), pp. 29-40.

⁶ See for example, John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries And the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996); Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995); *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, edited by Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005); More recently Historian Timothy Foran has considered Oblate understandings of the Metis at Ile-a-la-Crosse, Timothy Foran, *Defining Métis: Catholic Missionaries and the Idea of Civilization in Northwestern Saskatchewan 1845-1898* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

⁷ See for example, Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992, c1977); Other works have emphasized the conflict between Indigenous and Christian identities such as *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, edited by James Treat (New York: Routledge, Inc. 1996); Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God is Red*, (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1973). See also more recent scholarship focusing on decolonization and regaining

historical understandings of Catholicism in the Metis village of Ile-a-la-Crosse and the Dene English River First Nation (Patuanak).⁸

I am a *mônîyâskew*,⁹ a white-settler cisgendered English speaking woman from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan who has worked with community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse Saskatchewan off and on since 2006 for a range of historical research projects, and conducted interviews with members of the English River First Nation for this doctoral project on Indigenous stories of Catholicism between 2012 and 2014.¹⁰ At first meeting, most of the people I have worked with have assumed I am a social worker, teacher, or medical professional. My positionality as a non-Catholic, non-married woman was concerning to some of the Elders I have worked with, especially when they learned of my Anabaptist heritage.¹¹

Indigenous traditions such as Chantal Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

⁸ Although other historical studies include accents in their writing of Ile-a-la-Crosse, I do not include them in accordance with how the community members I have worked with write and pronounce Ile-a-la-Crosse today. Historically, Metis and Cree people referred to this place as *sakitawak*, or where the rivers meet. Today the English River First Nation has reserves at Patuanak and La Plonge in northwestern Saskatchewan. I have only worked with community members residing at Patuanak. I should also note that at Patuanak there is the reserve and the neighboring hamlet of Patuanak, though many people living off of reserve land have regained Indian status and membership in the English River First Nation. During the earlier twentieth century, members of the English River First Nation resided at reserves at Patuanak as well as Dipper Rapids (Dipper Lake), Knee Lake, Primeau Lake, and Cree Lake.

⁹ Cree term meaning non-Cree woman, typically understood to mean white woman. In Patuanak I was often referred to as “little white girl” in Dene.

¹⁰ In 2006 I was hired as one of five student research assistants to research and write an atlas plate for the *Otipimsuak – The Free People: Métis Land and Society in Northwest Saskatchewan*. I studied recent appearances of the Virgin Mary for that project, and worked closely with another student, MacKinley Darlington who was researching Marian Shrines. We co-authored an article about our work published in *Saskatchewan History* in 2009. I had the opportunity to return to Ile-a-la-Crosse in March of 2010 to share my article and draft atlas plate with community members. As a result of that trip, I volunteered to work on a second atlas plate about fiddle music and dance with my colleague Katya MacDonald. We made several trips in 2010 and 2011 to research and share our draft work with community members. In 2010 I also became involved in a community-mapping project spearheaded by Principal Vince Ahenakew at the high school, and involving several elders (including Tony Durocher). Because of my experiences working on these projects and my sense that I was starting to get to know some community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse in a more sustained and meaningful way, I switched my dissertation topic from the west coast to northwestern Saskatchewan. I signed an MOU with the village of Ile-a-la-Crosse in the spring of 2011, and one with English River First Nation in October of 2012. The *Otipimsuak Atlas* has yet to be published. I have been continuing to assist with the community-mapping project, though that work has been delayed by my other working commitments and efforts to complete my dissertation. In the spring of 2017 I met with Vince to discuss ways that the mapping project could be completed, and control over the map, including the capacity to update it, transferred to the local community. See Fehr and Darlington, “Encountering Mary.”

¹¹ Elders and community members have often asked me about my religious upbringing. My father was raised in the Mennonite Church and although he did not belong to that Church during my life, he retained Anabaptist views that baptism should be a choice one makes as an adult. Upon learning that I was not baptized, some community members tried to find a priest at Lac Ste. Anne to baptize me. They were unsuccessful, as the Catholic Church no longer allows priests to baptize people at the annual pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne (near Edmonton).

I interviewed Jacob Estralshenan when he was eighty-seven years old in the summer of 2013.¹² At that time, he led an active life. He picked blueberries with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, and as he walked in the northern bush he outpaced individuals half his age. He was well respected in Patuanak, evident in the fact that several people indicated that he would be an important person to speak with for my project on Indigenous stories of Catholicism in the northwest. Jacob was a Roman Catholic, who attended Mass regularly and was one of the few who knew old hymns in Dene.¹³ He regularly attended annual pilgrimages at St. Laurent (near Duck Lake Saskatchewan) and Lac Ste. Anne (west of Edmonton Alberta). He was born at Dipper Lake on the Churchill River, raised by his maternal grandparents, and spent his summers at Sucker point (at the mouth of the Beaver River). During the summer months he would paddle to church in Ile-a-la-Crosse every Sunday with his grandparents. He was sent to the Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) at a young age, and did not want to talk to me about that time in his life. He seemed sad that attendance at church was “slacking down” in the community, and predicted that once the Elders passed away, there would not be a church in Patuanak anymore.¹⁴

Sitting at his kitchen table with the sound of the radio in the background and his wife Mary washing dishes, Jacob explained that the part that always bothered him about the priests was their refusal to believe Dene stories and concentrated efforts to separate people from their own powerful Dene practices. He identified hypocrisy in priests expecting people to believe Catholic stories, but refusing to accept local stories of strong medicine men. To illustrate this point, Jacob shared a story about a strong Dene medicine man, drawing attention to the power of the ‘old days.’ The medicine man’s name was Crowhead.¹⁵ Jacob explained that in Crowhead’s time the Cree and Dene were enemies.¹⁶

¹² I formally interviewed Jacob twice, in August and October of 2013. I lost the recording of our second interview when transferring it from my ipod to computer. Jacob passed away on January 14th 2015.

¹³ Throughout this dissertation I refer to community members the way I did during our work together. For the most part, this means using first names after introducing individuals. This relates to my effort to be more open about my research process. Where this becomes challenging is when referencing stories shared outside of my own interviews – there I try referring to people as they are in the particular source, resulting in more formal references to people speaking before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples than to a collection of Elder stories.

¹⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

¹⁵ Although Jacob was the only person in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse to share the story of Crowhead with me, versions of the story are documented in a collection of stories by Dene Elders from Wollaston and Black Lake. In these published versions Crowhead is a very powerful, but also dangerous figure. Gabriel Tsannie, Interviewed at Wollaston Lake explained, “Dene elders think Hitler was Crowhead because he was not known to have died. They think somehow he managed to go across the ocean. It was said that Hitler, the leader of the German people, could not be killed. No one knows what happened to Crowhead because, according to the elders, he did not die.” *They Will Have Our Words: The Dene Elders Project, Volume 2* produced by Lynda Holland and Mary Ann Kkailther from



Figure 1.1: Jacob Estralshenan 2013. Photo by author.

The story begins in the spring when a group of Cree warriors attacks a Dene group – killing everyone except a young boy who ran away and hid. Crowhead came upon the young boy and was told to pile up the bodies before he settled down for a rest. At the medicine man’s command, the boy woke him when the Cree returned threatening to kill those they had missed. Crowhead uses his power to break all of the bones in the attackers’ bodies, leaving the boy with orders to slit their throats before diving under the nearby water, transforming into a fish or a beaver. When he returned to the surface, he heard the young boys sobs. “Why are you crying?” he demanded of the boy and threatened to do the same to the boy as he had done to the Cree. After Crowhead rested he told the boy not to cry, “We’ll go to the people.” They went back to the Dene people who had been killed, and Crowhead brought them back to life—reuniting the boy with his family.¹⁷ Jacob concluded his retelling by explaining, “I heard them stories a long time ago, and the priest won’t believe that, you know.”¹⁸

research by Larry Hewitt, (Holland-Dalby Educational Consulting, 2003), p. 52. For additional Crowhead stories see also pp. 45-46, 76.

¹⁶ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

This story, and Jacob's framing of it within the context of the hypocrisy of the Church regarding expectations of belief, draws attention to the significance of whose stories are believed and who is seen as capable of holding spiritual power - themes that will be explored throughout this dissertation. This dissertation considers the shifting power of narratives and their relation to Indigeneity,¹⁹ Catholicism, colonization, decolonization and reconciliation. More specifically, it focuses on shifting expressions of historical consciousness over time as revealed through specific narratives. That is to say, the content of the narratives as well as the context in which they are shared changes across generations so as to reveal Indigenous understandings of the past as a dynamic thing that adjusts and adapts as people acquire and process new information and experiences.²⁰

Another focus is examining the shifting, entangled relationship between local and regional community stories and broader national and even international narratives (including academic ones). This complicated relationship demonstrates the ambiguity of power dynamics in the colonizing and decolonizing projects, and the significance of varying understandings of Catholicism in how local people make sense of those processes. Throughout his telling of the story, Jacob emphasizes how powerful Crowhead was and how strong medicine men could be a long time ago, on par with the spiritual power evident in Catholic stories.²¹ In response to my question about how people in Patuanak came to be Catholic, Jacob replied:

Well when the priest came... They started talking to people about good living and stuff, and ah, evil. That's how we're Catholic and so they started believing the priests. So that's how they let go of all that stuff. If there was no priest right now and stuff, then there'd still be medicine men.²²

Taken on its own, Jacob's discussion of his community's conversion to Catholicism, and the role of the priests in the loss of Dene spirituality, sounds like a clear example of the historic missionizing and colonizing role of the Church. However, the specifics of the story, such as local

¹⁹ I use the term Indigeneity to consider how people understand what it means to be Indigenous. I echo Chris Andersen's concerns that efforts to define Indigeneity can be essentializing and limiting to Indigenous people. Andersen, "Métis." p. 16.

²⁰ Peter Seixas worked to promote the concept of historical consciousness as a tool for history education in a Canadian context. Historian Keith Thor Carlson, has applied the concept of historical consciousness (and how it differs from history) in his ethnohistorical/Indigenous history work with Stó:lō Coast Salish in the Fraser River Valley and Canyon in British Columbia. My use of historical consciousness here builds on Carlson's work. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, edited by Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

²¹ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

²² Ibid.

people choosing to “let go” of earlier practices as well as the broader context of our conversation and Jacob’s life history suggests the more complicated ways that Catholicism has figured within his community’s history and his own historical consciousness. In other parts of our interview, Jacob described his Catholic faith as strong, and sadness about the decline of the Church in his community explaining, “It [Catholicism] was our lives, that was what we believed. Maybe it’s right or maybe it’s wrong, I don’t know, nobody knows, nobody’s seen it.”²³ Jacob does not privilege Dene stories over Catholic stories, but rather negotiates both. Even though the priests refused to believe stories of strong Dene medicine men, Jacob believes them and his Catholic faith. More generally I have found that there is a range of ways that people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak negotiate what it means to be Catholic and Indigenous and to belong to historically Catholic communities within their local historical consciousness.

This dissertation contributes critically to the intersections of oral history, ethnohistory, and Indigenous research methodologies in the process of attempting meaningful community-engaged research, fields that emphasize respectfully engaging with local/Indigenous knowledge on its own terms as well as the necessity of a relational approach to community work.²⁴ Within scholarship privileging Indigenous research methodologies, stories of powerful medicine men can be readily recognized as significant to Indigenous knowledge. However, Jacob’s identification as a strong Catholic, and the significance of his Catholic beliefs in shaping his historical consciousness, does not fit with how some scholars define Indigeneity.²⁵ The following

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ I expand on this point in a more detailed discussion of my methodologies later in this chapter. In particular see: *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, edited by Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999); Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson, “Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part 3: The Social Relations of Oral History.” *Saskatchewan History*. vol. 51, no. 2 (1999): 29-35; Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007); Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Blackpoint N.C.: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996); Julie Cruikshank, With Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990); Carlson, *The Power of Place*; Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

²⁵ For example, Stevenson, “Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part 3”; McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*; Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; M. Battiste, “The Decolonization of Aboriginal Education: Dialogue, Reflection and Action in Canada,” in *Educational Theories and Practices from the Majority World*, edited by Pierre R. Dasen and Abdeljalil Akkari (New Dehli, India: Sage Publications, 2008).

is my effort to recognize the significance of the metaphysical in how individuals like Jacob have understood their world, while broadening scholarly understandings of Indigenous knowledge to include both stories of strong medicine men and praying the rosary. This effort is accompanied with care not to essentialize or stereotype Dene and Metis people as innately spiritual, and my recognition of the differences within and between communities.²⁶

Although Jacob and Tony figure equally in the following chapters, my work with the two men differed substantially. I interviewed Jacob twice, and briefly spoke with him a few other times. My interviews with Jacob differed in both content and style from my conversations with other community members.²⁷ In contrast I have worked with Tony Durocher on a multitude of projects, and try and stop in to say hello when I am in Ile-a-la-Crosse.²⁸ I first met Tony in 2010 as part of a community-driven mapping project in Ile-a-la-Crosse that I was assisting with. That project has yet to be completed and is an example of some of the limits in my community-engaged work. Tony and other Elders have shown understanding and kindness considering the mapping project's seven-year duration. Tony is committed to documenting and recording his stories for future generations, and has written out some of his memories as well as entertaining stories. Since 2010, I have interviewed Tony on a range of topics, several which relate to this dissertation, as well as others like his work building roads in the region. These interviews about his work reflect his own historical interests and have provided me with a clearer understanding of Ile-a-la-Crosse's history. Sometimes a year goes by between our conversations, but Tony often continues to reflect on my questions and share his thoughts at our next interview. My work with Tony approaches ideas of sustained conversations, unlike my work with Elders like Jacob.²⁹

²⁶ Lutz, "First Contact as a Spiritual Performance," p. 45.

²⁷ Jacob was the only person I interviewed to share stories of Crowhead and other Dene stories of powerful medicine men.

²⁸ Since 2015 I have visited Ile-a-la-Crosse about once per year.

²⁹ Scholars in oral history, anthropology, and ethnohistory have noted the significance of having sustained conversations with community members, rather than a single interview. See for example Henry Greenspan, "Afterword," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, edited by Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*; Leslie Robertson and the Kwagwł Gixsam, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church and Custom*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012), p. xix.



Figure 1.2: Ile-a-la-Crosse community mapping session (from left to right: Eliza Aubichon, Tony Durocher, Ovide Desjarlais, and Allard McCallum). Photo by author.

Tony Durocher was born in Beauval. His father was from Beauval and his mother was originally from Dipper Lake (like Jacob) though she was raised in Beauval at the residential school. Tony's mother was widowed when he was younger, and he spent some time with a foster family along the Beaver River. Because his family was poor, Tony considers his time at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse as some of the best years of his life. Arriving at what he refers to as the convent in 1941, he has consistently described how having three meals a day and making life-long friends contrasted with hard times before. Tony's wife Vicky (*Nesus*) passed away before I met Tony, but he has shared stories of her and their life together. They raised their family in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Tony worked on road crews and later owned the first taxi business in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Now in his eighties, Tony tries to regularly attend church. In response to my question if people stopped going to church, he replied that he did not notice when people did not go, but that it would be noticed if I started going to the church- indicating the significance of belonging (and not belonging) to the local Catholic community.

During an interview about the community takeover of the school from the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s, Tony explained, "When you don't know the story before the story,

sometimes it doesn't come out. It comes out but not in the way it started.”³⁰ This was specifically in reference to the difference between his understanding of events and how they were depicted by Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie in his book *Drumming From Within*. In addition to the takeover we discussed methodologies and how to tell when someone is “bullshitting,” where Tony returned to the themes of “the story before the story,” and only being able to tell what you know. I interpreted Tony’s understandings as a call for a deeper history to situate local events. It caused me to reflect upon the ways I considered Catholicism in his community from the late nineteenth century to the present, as well as my attention to local historical consciousness. I also interpret Tony’s statement as a piece of methodological instruction. As the following chapters are primarily based on stories that community members have shared with me, the story before the story becomes the context of our conversations and our varying relationships, an aspect that often remains opaque in current oral history and Indigenous studies scholarship in spite of a recognition of the intersubjective nature of oral history work and the significance of relationships between researcher and community members when working with Indigenous communities. As such, this dissertation often negotiates three narratives: historical events, local historical consciousness of those events and their intersections with individual life histories, and my own accounts of the context in which those conversations took place.

The following chapters are based on my interviews with Jacob and Tony and thirty others from Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak since 2006. First and foremost this dissertation sets out to engage with local stories of Indigenous Catholicism as well as the varying ways that Indigenous people make sense of their history of Catholicism, a topic that has been neglected in Indigenous history. My deeper consideration of over 170 years of Catholicism within northwest Saskatchewan reveals how local faith has at times reinforced and at others challenged the power of the Church as an authoritarian institution. Local historical consciousness varies within communities and class, gender, age, and life histories factor into the stories people choose to tell about their faith and the Church. It also factors into their understandings of how being Catholic and Indigenous either fits or does not fit within their personal interpretations of their communities’ history. In this regard, there are multiple ways that people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak understand what it means to be Metis and Dene, though increasingly for younger people, there is a tendency to separate Catholicism from Indigeneity. In contrast, some of the

³⁰ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

Elders I spoke with, like Jacob and Tony, noted the significance of Catholicism as part of how they lived and what they believed. In effect, they have spent their lives participating in and being members of a Catholic community.

Historically the Catholic community in northwestern Saskatchewan has cut across cultural and status differences bringing people together for Catholic celebrations, including the centennial of the mission in 1946. Godparents, pilgrimages, and more recently Marian shrines and appearances have continued to connect people in the northwest as part of a Catholic community. Like any community, this Catholic community is contentious as not all people and practices have been welcomed historically, and local efforts against the authoritarian aspects of the Church have been seen by some clergy and Indigenous Catholics as being against their interpretation of what it means to be part of the Catholic community. One of the consequences of these movements has been the refusal of some Elders to believe stories of abuse at the residential schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beavual. There is not a single narrative of Indigenous Catholicism in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. Instead, there are varying ways that individuals have negotiated Catholicism and Indigeneity as interpretations of what it means to belong to a Catholic community have continued and changed over time, informing and complicating my scholarly understanding of colonization, decolonization, and reconciliation.

Each section of this dissertation is anchored around an individual and/or event within local historical consciousness in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. Chapters two and three consider stories of the Dene prophet Willow Heart as an entrée to discussing local stories of 1885 as well as the Treaty and Scrip Commission in 1906. Chapters four and five shift from considering a Dene woman to a male oblate priest, Father Louis Moraud, who was a missionary priest in Patuanak and surrounding communities from 1916-1965 and who some local Indigenous people consider to be a saint. I then turn to considering Catholicism and efforts at decolonization in chapters six and seven, focusing on the local takeover of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Church during the early 1970s as well as the continuing Catholic faith of many community members, including the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in local efforts at healing. Finally, chapter eight considers the exclusion of the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Canadian Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). By exploring stories relating to Catholicism in northwest Saskatchewan, we gain a fuller understanding of the complexities and contradictions in how colonialism, decolonization, and reconciliation have

functioned in this particular region. I will now provide a more detailed discussion of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak as well as some of the key terms that are used throughout this study before outlining my historiographical contributions and elaborating on my methodological approach to community engaged work.

The Dene-Cree conflict in the story of Crowhead helps to situate the contemporary divisions existing in what is now known as northwest Saskatchewan. Today, tensions with deep historical roots remain between Cree, Metis, and Dene communities, and these have been exacerbated by the reserve system, treaties and scrip, and Indian Status as outlined in the Indian Act.³¹ However, there is also a historical consciousness of shared history, Catholic faith, and kinship (including godparents) that has transcended efforts at colonial categorization and division. Many Elders in Patuanak speak Dene, Cree, and some French and English. Jacob belongs to the English River First Nation, a Dene community, and learned the stories of Crowhead and some other Dene stories from his Cree grandfather.³² Similarly, Tony Durocher lives in the predominantly Metis community of Ile-a-la-Crosse and has been working to record Michif and Cree place names as part of the local mapping project. His mother was originally from the Dene community of Dipper Lake, and Tony has relatives in Patuanak even though his mother was disconnected from her family. These kinship connections are not unique to Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse, but extend throughout the region of the Churchill River watershed from Pine House to La Loche, often referred to as northwest Saskatchewan or the west side.³³

Until the 1960s and 1970s, the families that today make up Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak lived in smaller family settlements around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse, along the Churchill River, and even as far north as Cree Lake. Elders often refer to specific place names in Cree, Michif, Dene,

³¹ Although Ile-a-la-Crosse is a predominantly Metis community, I will typically refer to Metis and Cree cultures and perspectives in relation to that community because of the complexities of intermarriage, status, and local identities. Some individuals I have worked with in Ile-a-la-Crosse identify as Metis, and others focus more on their Cree language and culture.

³² Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

³³ Many of the topics discussed in this dissertation are of regional significance beyond Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse. I have focused on two communities rather than the watershed from Pinehouse to La Loche because of the constraints of doctoral research in terms of time and finances. Tony illustrated the significance of connection, explaining, "We have relations in Beauval, we have relations in Patuanak, and right to La Loche. Everybody's connected. The Morin's, the Durocher's, and you go back a little bit, oh yeah, they start at first the younger people they don't know that's their distant cousin. Like at my grandmother she had my mother in Patuanak, she was but then she married in La Loche, so I have uncles and aunties in La Loche, in Patuanak too. And my dad, him Beauval, so my aunties from my dad's side, they married in Canoe Lake, Beauval, Ile-a-la-Crosse... You don't tell everybody who your cousin's are (laughing). Some you like to brag about, but some (laughing). I like teasing them anyways. But we're all connected." Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 August 2013.

French and English. The Cree name for Ile-a-la-Crosse is *sakitewak*,³⁴ or ‘where the rivers meet’ (referring to the Beaver and Churchill Rivers). *Des Netheh* is the Dene name for the Churchill River. Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak (sometimes called Chagona in the historical record) are located at opposite ends of Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse, a distance of forty-eight miles. Halfway Lake was a settlement and stopping place halfway between Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. People lived in family clusters around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse at places like *alabolō* (the first island), Big Island, Sucker Point, Sandy Point, Fort Black, and along the Beaver River.³⁵ Many who now reside in Patuanak originally lived in settlements along the Churchill River such as Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, and Primeau Lake.

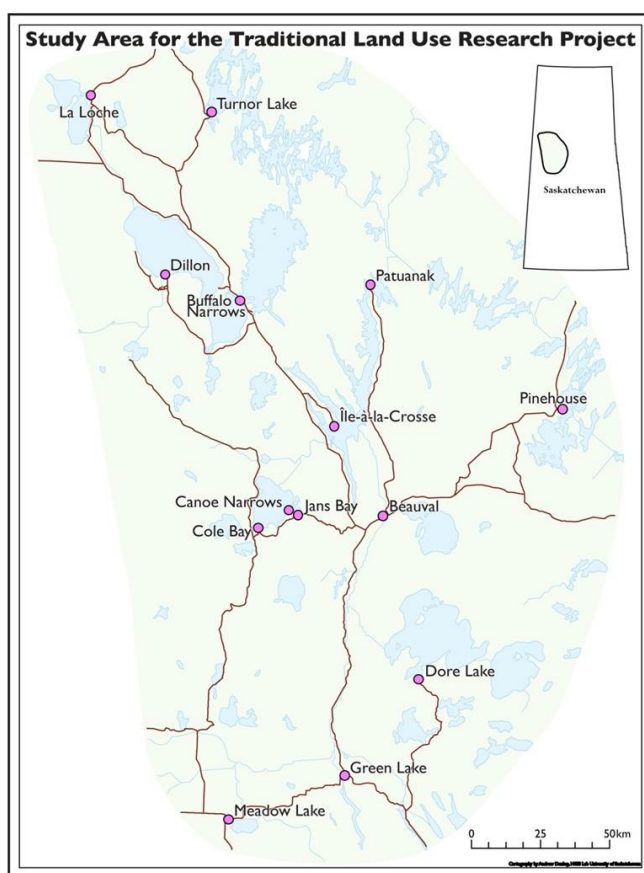


Figure 1.3: Map of northwestern Saskatchewan, map prepared for CURA-funded land use study.

³⁴ Within standardized written Cree words are not capitalized.

³⁵ For example, Tony Durocher explained that Morins and some Durochers used to live at Sandy Point, some Gardiners and Daigneaults at the Beaver River, Daigneaults at Fort Black, and Bouviers at *alabolō*, or the first island. Ibid.

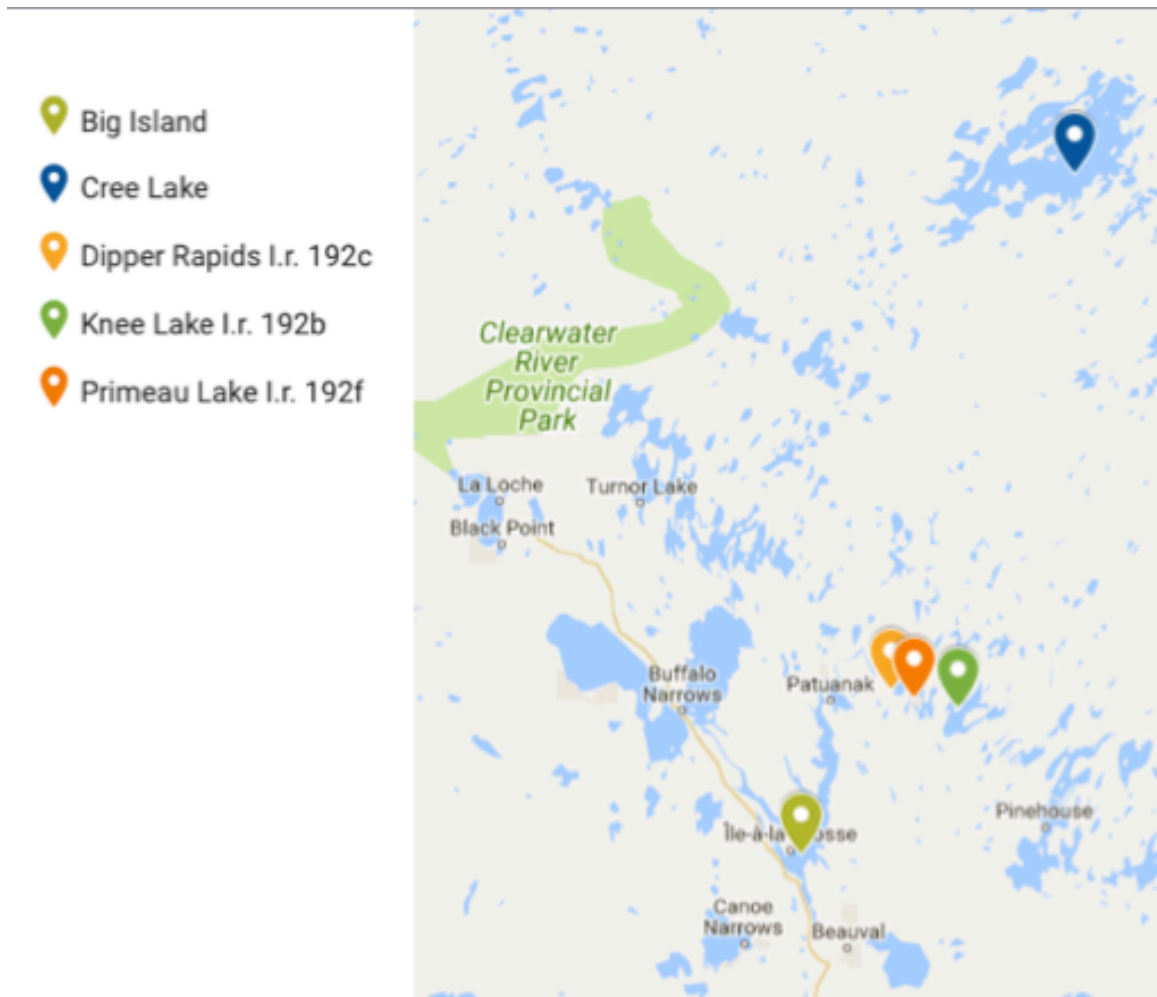


Figure 1.4: More detailed map of the study area and some of the places discussed. Map created by author using Google Maps.

Sakitewak was a meeting place for the Cree and Dene prior to the arrival of traders, becoming the logical place for a trading post in 1776 as well as the oblate mission in 1846. Father Moraud came to Patuanak as the first priest of the satellite mission there in 1916, and built his first church in 1937. It was not until the late 1960s, but mostly in the 1970s, that people began to relocate into the settlements at Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, primarily for schooling reasons. It was at this time that better roads began to connect these communities to the south and started to replace the rivers as the primary means of transportation. For much of the time period discussed in this dissertation, people did not all live in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, but in the smaller settlements discussed above. I indicate the specific places where people grew up as well as where they currently reside. More generally, I refer simply to Patuanak or English River and Ile-a-la-Crosse, or ‘the community’ as shorthand for these earlier settlements as well as current iterations.

I also refer to northwest Saskatchewan or the west side to indicate issues common to both communities and the region more generally.

Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak are visibly Catholic communities. Marian shrines providing protection to travelers are prominent on the outskirts of both. On one of my early visits to Patuanak, I explained that I was interested in community histories of Christianity. A community member responded by saying, “there are no Christians here, we’re all Catholic.”³⁶ In these communities the term Christian is generally used to refer to and distinguish Protestant Born Again Christians. This is not to say that there is not tension and conflict within these communities regarding the often-destructive roles of the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith historically, but it does speak to a sense of the deepness of Roman Catholic identity in the region. Many of the people interviewed, including those that were no longer practicing Catholics, noted that they “were all Catholics” when they were younger.³⁷

A significant component of this dissertation is in considering the various meanings that people attribute to both their historically Catholic communities, and their understandings of what it means to be Catholic. As such, I define “Catholic community” as a community of individuals who identify as Catholics. There is a sense amongst some community members that membership in this community has shifted over time. Whereas in the past nearly everyone was baptized into this community – increasingly some people have chosen to reject Catholicism, or to give their children a choice in whether or not they want to become members in the Church.³⁸ Belonging to a Catholic community historically included material benefits, as the Church was one of the only providers of social welfare and relief in the region until 1945.³⁹ Since the 1970s, the political influence of the Church has declined in the region, though some people continue to find healing and connection in belonging to the Catholic community. Sometimes community members identify with a broader community of Catholics (beyond northwest Saskatchewan), though they

³⁶ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

³⁷ For example Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014; Clément Chartier, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ottawa, 14 January 2014.

³⁸ Jacob identifies this shift occurring in the late 1980s. Dorothy Dubrule, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 October 2014; Max Morin, 15 July 2014; Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

³⁹ Marta Danylewycz’s *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) draws attention to secular motives that may have attracted women to religious orders. This serves as a reminder of the potential for multiple motives of Cree and Dene people in their commitment to their Catholic communities. However, unlike this earlier scholarship, I consider secular motives while leaving room for sincere expressions of Catholicism.

have not always been recognized as equal members of the broader Catholic community. Church when capitalized indicates the broader Roman Catholic Church, particularly the institution of the Church or a broader Catholic community. I try to distinguish between the Church as an institution and authority figures such as priests and bishops within that institution. When spelled with a lower case c, church refers to a place of worship.

Generally, I use the term Catholic and Catholicism to refer to individuals who identify as belonging to the Roman Catholic faith. There is range in what individuals understand this to mean, and I try to refer to the faith aspects of Catholicism and the institutional aspects of the Church separately, or clarify how community members see these aspects relating. Elders who are understood by their family members to equate Catholic faith with deference to the institution of the Catholic Church, and more specifically authority figures like priests and bishops, are often identified by those family members as “hardcore” or “diehard” Catholics.⁴⁰

Belief, a term that community members often use, refers to an individual’s faith that is informed by the teachings of the Catholic Church as well as local interpretations of concepts like saints and miracles that often differ from official Church doctrine. Those I interviewed, like Jacob, often referred to the significance of belief, in either their own faith or as a sign of the Church’s hypocrisy. I interpret belief to speak to intention and sincerity in accepting things that cannot be seen, even though community members often provided evidence of healing or miracles that result from what they understand to be a strong belief.⁴¹

This dissertation does not shy away from difficult topics such as the history of the Indian Residential Schools at Beauval (BIRS) and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Attendance at those schools has shaped historical consciousness and so is critical in comprehending Indigenous experiences of Catholicism in the northwest. As Jacob so eloquently highlighted, there is a long history of stories that are not being believed. Experiences at the schools relate to historical consciousness discussed in each of the following chapters, so I provide some context for the schools here. Due to the geographic context of the region, with families living at various settlements along Churchill River and Beaver River and around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse, in 1906 the first chief of English River, Chief William Apeis specifically asked for mission-run residential schools so that

⁴⁰ Patrick Daigneault, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Prince Albert, 28 August 2014; Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014.

⁴¹ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013; Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014; Leonie and Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012.

parents could continue their traditional socio-economic ways of life and so children would receive catechism and sacraments. Until 1905, the grey nuns ran a small boarding school in Ile-a-la-Crosse that had fifteen pupils when it opened in 1860, and thirty-three children in 1876. This timeline of the schools is further complicated because of the varying connections between the schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the schools at Beauval, and the differing status of these schools in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). In 1897, the federal government officially provided funding for the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. In 1906, the school moved to La Plonge Indian Reserve 192, across from the Beaver River near Beauval. A separate school was reopened in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1912/1913.⁴² From that point on, boarding schools were known as the Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) and Ile-a-la-Crosse, though the IRSSA (implemented in 2007) has only included the school at Beauval.

Both schools grew substantially over the twentieth century. In 1921, the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse had fifty students, twenty-five of whom were boarders. In 1927, nineteen out of thirty-seven students died in a fire at BIRS. A new larger brick school opened in 1932. By 1946, a larger school was opened in Ile-a-la-Crosse, with 115 boarders out of 150 students. In 1949/50, BIRS had an average of 120 boarders. By 1959, the total number of students at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse had grown to 231, 113 of which were boarders. BIRS continued to be administrated by an oblate priest until 1972. The grey nuns were initially involved in a new day school built at Patuanak in 1971.⁴³ In 1976 the oblate mission transferred control of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse to the lay school board, and the sleeping arrangements at the boarding school were officially closed.⁴⁴ In 1983, BIRS was transferred to the control of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, and soon became known as the Beauval Indian Education Centre. It reportedly closed in 1995. Two staff members from BIRS have since been convicted of indecent assault and gross indecency:

⁴² The National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation provides some information about the history of the schools at Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Because this is based on research materials prepared for claims associated with the IRSSA, it only focuses on “recognized schools.” I take issue with the timeline provided as it glosses over the more complicated history of the schools at Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse, and does not include the fact that a residential school continued in Ile-a-la-Crosse until the 1970s. I have drawn on a history of the mission at Ile-a-la-Crosse to supplement the timeline provided here. I was unable to find the same information about Beauval in terms of attendance. “Beauval IRS: School Narrative,” National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba, Accessed 8 June 2017 <http://nctr.ca/School%20narratives/SK/BEAUVAl.pdf>; “The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years,” Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://www.jkcc.com/rcindex .html>.

⁴³ English River First Nation “Historical Information” <http://www.erfn.net/community/historical-information/> Accessed 29 May 2017.

⁴⁴ “The Religious History of St. John the Baptiste Parish.”

Father Norbert Dufault (a former principal at BIRS for at least 1963-64) and Paul Leroux (a dormitory supervisor from at least 1960-67). Several community members from Patuanak testified against Paul Leroux in 2013, when he was convicted of molesting fourteen young boys at BIRS.⁴⁵

My work contributes to a growing body of critical ethnohistory and Indigenous studies scholarship that centers Indigenous knowledge and provides more nuanced discussions of the complicated ways that Indigenous peoples have encountered colonial systems.⁴⁶ This scholarship challenges essentialized notions of Indigeneity and authenticity.⁴⁷ Historian Philip Deloria has addressed the humbling challenges of considering Indigenous leaders during the early twentieth century and complicated views of Indigenous people who were employed by or participated in colonial systems as “assimilated.”⁴⁸ Anthropologist Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu’l Gixsam have similarly worked to complicate how Ga’axsta’las (Jane Constance Cook), who supported the potlatch ban, is understood. They write: “Conscious of not portraying Indigenous peoples as victims, scholars emphasize the enduring history of struggle against colonial oppression. But have we perhaps favoured a kind of David and Goliath backstory, one that overlooks the more nuanced responses and coping strategies used by people who acted *within* dominant structures of power?”⁴⁹

While there is a growing body of scholarship that considers more nuanced encounters between Indigenous peoples and colonial systems economically, politically, and intimately, Indigenous encounters with Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, have not received the same attention. As historians Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton recently observed: “Canadian historical literature, meanwhile, has tended to either overlook Christianity or reduce its role to one of two dichotomous poles: a wholesale instrument of colonialism or a force with little

⁴⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939 to 2000: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 1* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), pp. 449-450.

⁴⁶ See for example, Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen*; Robertson and the Kwagu’l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las*; Carlson, *The Power of Place*; Keith Carlson, “Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon.” In *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada’s Native Pasts* Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Phillip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ See for example, Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Philip Deloria, “Four Thousand Invitations,” *The American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (2013): p. 26.

⁴⁹ Robertson and the Kwagu’l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las*, p. 39.

bearing on the ‘real’ (read: economic and political) vectors of colonial change.”⁵⁰ A small sub-field of scholarship considering Indigenous Christianity⁵¹ primarily considers questions of conversion and early encounters with little work considering Indigenous Christians during the twentieth century.⁵² Histories of Indigenous people during the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that focus on political organizing, sovereignty, reclaiming Indigenous traditions and decolonizing processes tend to position Christianity as a colonial other, leaving little room for Indigenous Christians. In this way, the nuance and complexity of scholarship considering Indigenous Christianity in earlier periods, and scholarly consideration of Indigenous engagement with other colonial systems during the early twentieth century has not informed how Christianity is interpreted during the last century. By considering Indigenous historical consciousness and including the perspectives of Indigenous Christians, my dissertation contributes to three subfields of scholarship: Canadian Indigenous history (including the distinct field of Metis history); Indigenous Christian history; and a regional historiography.⁵³ My work suggests the need to more thoroughly consider a broader definition of Indigeneity that has space for Indigenous Christianity within the larger field of Indigenous history, as doing so is necessary

⁵⁰ Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, “Introduction,” *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, edited by Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), p. 4.

⁵¹ Although I use the term Catholic rather than the more general Christian throughout this dissertation to reflect local understandings of those terms, throughout this historiographical discussion I refer more generally to Indigenous Christianity.

⁵² See for example: Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005); Laura Peers, “‘The Guardian of All:’ Jesuit Missionary and Salish Perception of the Virgin Mary,” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2nd edition, edited by Jennifer S. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003); Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History*, second edition (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007); Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012); Bradford and Horton (ed), *Mixed Blessings*.

⁵³ In terms of regional scholarship, I draw on the work of Brenda Macdougall, anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa; and historian David Quiring. More recently, Ile-a-la-Crosse has been the topic for several Masters and PhD theses, including those by Katya MacDonald, Kevin Gambell, Liam Haggarty, Omeasoo Butt, and Signa Daum Shanks. I will signal how my work relates to the existing regional scholarship in various chapters. Of note here is my agreement with historian David Quiring regarding the distinctiveness of colonialism in the north and the roles that Churches played. I argue there is a need to consider Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous faith to fully understand the power of the Church. My work counters Quiring’s assertion that the “CCF had effectively toppled the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches from their traditional positions.” Quiring’s history relies heavily on archival sources from the government of Saskatchewan, particularly from the Department of Northern Saskatchewan (DNS) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and interviews conducted in the La Ronge region of eastern (and largely Anglican) northern Saskatchewan. The perspectives of northern Indigenous people, especially in Saskatchewan’s northwest, are peripheral to Quiring’s narrative David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), p. 254.

to more fully engage with Indigenous knowledge and adds to our understandings of colonialism, decolonization, and reconciliation.

Historians have for several decades now critiqued Metis historiography's preoccupation with "great men" such as Louis Riel and the Metis homeland of Red River. Historian J.R. Miller has noted that the discipline has been "partially cured of Red River myopia." Metis Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall suggests that this has been replaced by a slightly broader "plains-centric focus" which typically excludes the distinct Metis culture that developed in the northern woodlands.⁵⁴ Sociologist Chris Andersen and political scientist Adam Gaudry, mark a more recent return to Red River scholarship. Andersen provides important and timely correctives to the racialization of the Metis in law and scholarship, but as will be shown below, his alternative Metis national history, with Red River firmly positioned at the core, speaks more directly to contemporary politics than to historical realities that were lived by Metis people outside of the plains in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Andersen focuses on events that he sees as "key to any narration of a history of Metis nationhood," notably the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, the 1849 effort of the HBC to prosecute Metis fur traders, the Battle of Grand Coteau, and the two events associated with Riel—1869/70 in Red River and 1885 in Batoche.⁵⁶ He is critical of a narrative arc that sees the rise and fall and subsequent re-growth of the Metis Nation throughout the nineteenth century (with its demise in 1885, and rebirth during the constitutional talks of the 1980s), but does not offer an alternative. The Métis National Council (MNC) provides a similar narrative of the nation, with a focus on Red River and Riel, though their narrative also carefully includes historic fur trade Metis-majority communities in northwest Saskatchewan, such as Buffalo Narrows and Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁵⁷

The MNC offers their own history on their webpage, explaining, "consistently throughout history, the Métis people have acted collectively to protect and fight for their rights, lands and ongoing existence as a distinct Aboriginal people and nation within the Canadian federation – from the Métis provisional governments of Riel in Manitoba (1869-70) and Saskatchewan (1885)

⁵⁴ J.R. Miller, "From Riel to the Métis," in *Reflections of Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 54; Brenda Macdougall, "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis Communities," *The Canadian Historical Review* 87, 3 (2006): p. 439.

⁵⁵ Chris Andersen, "Métis," pp. 5-6. See also Adam Gaudry, "Commentary: Métis Issues on @IndigenousXca," *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2015): pp. 94-107.

⁵⁶ Andersen, "Métis," p. 118.

⁵⁷ "The Metis Nation," *Metis National Council*, Accessed 8 February 2017. <<http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis>>

to contemporary Métis governing bodies.”⁵⁸ Although the MNC attempts to bring Ile-a-la-Crosse into their national narrative by referring to it as an example of a Metis majority community in the rural and hinterland areas of the mid-Canada Corridor,⁵⁹ their focus on Riel (like Andersen’s) and their depiction of Ile-a-la-Crosse as part of the hinterland, leaves the community on the periphery of the Metis nation as well as the Canadian nation. These national narratives provide little space to consider the interplay between regional and national histories, let alone the way understandings of such things have shifted within local historical consciousness. Andersen does not openly question or critique the Metis history of Ile-a-la-Crosse, and even cites Macdougall’s scholarship on Ile-a-la-Crosse as an example of an effective alternative to misguided definitions of Metis identity based on “mixedness.”⁶⁰ However, what is left unanswered and opaque is how an historic community like Ile-a-la-Crosse fits within a Metis national narrative based around Red River, and the Buffalo Hunt.

J.R. Miller has suggested, “The artificial barrier between Métis and Indians should be obliterated.”⁶¹ This “artificial barrier” is often attributed to government policies such as the Indian Act (1876) and the allotment of treaty and scrip on the basis of race.⁶² Andersen who disagrees with Miller’s critique of “Red River myopia” echoes his call for studies that cross status lines, and that move beyond discussions of nineteenth century ethnogenesis and into the twentieth century.⁶³ Focusing on Indigenous notions of kinship has been an effective way for scholars to begin complicating status-based identities, however, some of the most promising work continues to be limited in framing historical narratives around current iterations of communities.⁶⁴

Despite the picture some scholars and organizations have recently painted of a Metis society that was timelessly unified by the Cree cultural concept of interconnected kinship between all humans and non-humans, living and dead, the people I spoke with and the records I

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Andersen, “*Métis*,” p. 6.

⁶¹ J.R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” pp. 51-52.

⁶² See “Ile-a-la-Crosse, Sask 92-12-08,” in *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, CD-ROM (Ottawa: Libraxus, 1997). For scholarly discussions of the impact of government policy on Indigenous identities see James B. Waldram, “‘The Other Side’: Ethnostatus Distinction in Western Subarctic Native Communities,” in 1885 and After: *Native Society in Transition*, ed. by F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), and J.R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2004), pp. 1-51.

⁶³ Andersen, “*Métis*,” pp.18, 204-207.

⁶⁴ See for example, Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*; Macdougall, *One of the Family*.

consulted revealed a more historically fluid community where mechanisms for overcoming differences were always being challenged by forces that promoted divisions. The government's policy creating treaty and scrip needs to be understood within this more complicated history of local and regional collective identities. For example, in her study of the Metis at Ile-a-la-Crosse Brenda Macdougall rightly draws attention to the significance of kinship ties across the northwest. However, her equation of kinship, with a particular historical definition of the Cree term *whakootawin*,⁶⁵ focusing on Metis and community identities located in Ile-a-la-Crosse, misses the possibility of deeply considering broader shifting regional connections and kinship (including god-parent relationships) that cut across status, cultural, economic, religious, spiritual, and other more fluidly defined community boundaries. Indeed, she concludes her book by noting the way that the treaty and scrip policy interfered with earlier kinship practices:

The issuance of scrip and the signing of treaties, first at Green Lake and later at Île-à-la-Crosse and Portage La Loche, drew a line across the northwest for the first time and divided treaty and non-treaty people geopolitically and legally...Where culture had once bound communities and family as a social unifier, Canadian law now had the potential to disrupt old alliances, alter expectations, and create categories of haves and have-nots. Historically, there had certainly been differences between being Cree, Dene, or Metis, yet well into the twentieth century those divisions were often muted because of a shared language, lineage, and, in some instances, economic mode of life.⁶⁶

My comparative study supports Macdougall's assertions that scrip and treaty policies created divisions between communities. I have also found that differences between Cree, Dene, and Metis cultures have continued throughout the twentieth century—as have kinship ties, and a shared history. Rather than the allocation of treaty and scrip being the first division between communities, it is an additional boundary between communities that have various differences and connections between them. Furthermore, while kinship connections have been and remain significant in the region, I do not see them as uniquely defining “Metisness.” In this way the arguments about *whakootawin* are limited by Macdougall's efforts to solely define a Metis community, rather than more complex regional identities of connections and divisions between

⁶⁵ *Whakootawin* is a Cree term that Macdougall (and other scholars) have taken from Maria Campbell to use as a theoretical concept. Macdougall explains *whakootawin* “is predicated upon a specific Aboriginal notion and definition of family as a broadly conceived sense of relatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual.” See Macdougall, *One of the Family*, p. 3; See also Tasha Beeds, “Rethinking Edward Ahenakew's Intellectual Legacy: Expressions of Nêhiyawî-mâmitonêyihecikan (Cree Consciousness or Thinking), in *Mixed Blessings*, pp. 119-144.

⁶⁶ Macdougall, *One of the Family*, p. 246.

Cree and Dene cultures, status differences, and increasingly efforts to connect to national narratives of what it means to be “Metis” or Indigenous that at times contradict local histories.

The split within Indigenous history between Metis history and First Nations’ history is reflected in studies of Catholicism in northwestern Saskatchewan. Macdougall has critiqued earlier scholars (notably Martha McCarthy and Kerry Abel) that “generally accept that the Metis had no such (conversion) experience but were naturally Christian by virtue of their mixed-ancestry.”⁶⁷ I build on this important critique of equating Metis Catholicism as an inherent result of mixing in chapter eight. Whereas Macdougall’s work focuses predominantly on individuals and communities that she defines as Metis, my study additionally draws attention to the significance of Catholicism for neighbouring Dene communities and the capacity for Catholic communities to cut across cultural and status divisions. Macdougall’s argument draws attention to a lay Catholicism practiced by fur traders and notes that the “Church worked to establish itself in this community throughout the later half of the nineteenth century, acculturating to the demands of Metis cultural identity.”⁶⁸ Based on my research in both Ile-a-la-Crosse and English River, I do not see this as unique to Metis people, as kinship ties to fur-trading families and support of the Catholic Church were widespread throughout the region.

There is a small but rich body of scholarship considering Indigenous encounters with Christianity.⁶⁹ Historian Susan Neylan challenges earlier binary approaches to Indigenous Christianity⁷⁰ by questioning why the acceptance of Christianity by Indigenous North Americans is seen to automatically replace/preclude Indigenous forms of spirituality. She builds on the older mission historiography, but attempts to provide a more “nuanced understanding of christianization,” considering how Indigenous people negotiated their encounters with Christianity on their own terms. Lesley Robertson’s and the Kwagwł Gixsam’s *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church and Custom* provides a

⁶⁷ Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan,” p. 60.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶⁹ I have only consulted historical studies in English. There is a separate body of Francophone scholarship regarding Indigenous Christianity that was beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁷⁰ Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); See also Sergei Kan’s ethnohistorical study of Tlingit conversion to Russian Orthodoxy looks at the factors that influenced the Tlingit’s acceptance of Christianity and that shaped their view of Russian Orthodoxy. See Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity Through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). Bradford and Horton eds. *Mixed Blessings*.

model of community engaged work. The authors provide important critiques of the depiction of Christianity as oppositional to Indigeneity, writing: “Not surprisingly ideas about who is or is not real or authentic continue to be set in the triad of Christianity, whiteness, and economic prosperity. Christianity is associated with an imagined-to-be-complete loss of Indigenous spirituality, with the extinction and replacement of languages and the imposition of European gender values and family life.”⁷¹ This is an important scholarly critique that I echo in this dissertation and attempt to build upon. However, I find that in focusing on the political and strategic aspects of Ga’axsta’las, Robertson and Ga’axsta’las’s descendants have left little room for the possibility of Ga’axsta’las having a sincere Christian faith. This may be due to the historical consciousness of Ga’axsta’las’s descendants, as I have found in my own work generational differences affects local historical consciousness, particularly regarding the history of Catholicism and how the Catholic faith of Elders and earlier generations are understood by their children and grandchildren.⁷²

More recently historians Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton’s edited collection *Mixed Blessings* brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to consider the “mixed blessings” of Indigenous encounters and engagement with Christianity in a Canadian context.⁷³ The editors position their collection as part of a shift “examining the complex, and often contradictory, role of missionaries and Christianity in the construction of the Native American religious landscape.”⁷⁴ I situate my own work within the direction that Bradford and Horton have set out, while moving my historical study of Christianity to more thoroughly consider the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁷⁵ My work builds on these earlier studies in its critique of scholarship that

⁷¹ Robertson and the Kwagu’l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las*, p. 33.

⁷² Robertson explains that the descendants do not “seek to erase her [Ga’axsta’las’s] involvement in colonial processes. They seek to contextualize her activities in the villages and in the wider political sphere. By revisiting her story, they interrogate the historical record and seek to overcome a sense of stigmatization linked to her actions.” Ibid, p. 8.

⁷³ Bradford and Horton eds. *Mixed Blessings*.

⁷⁴ Bradford and Horton, “Introduction,” p. 3.

⁷⁵ The collection includes my article “A Subversive Sincerity: The I:yem Memorial, Catholicism, and political Opportunity in S’olh Téméxw,” that considers the political as well as religious significance of a memorial built in 1938 by the Stó:lō Coast Salish in the Fraser Canyon, B.C. One other article in the collection takes a historical approach to Indigenous Christianity during the twentieth Century. Tasha Beeds “Rethinking Edward Ahenakew’s Intellectual Legacy,” helps to resituate understandings of Edward Ahenakew within a Cree context. Her article challenges depictions of Indigenous Christians as less Indigenous, but like Robertson’s leaves little room for Ahenakew’s Christianity. My work leads me to question how Christianity may have also shaped Ahenakew’s historical consciousness, not to dismiss Ahenakew’s Indigeneity, but to engage with his views on his own terms. Most of the historical articles in the collection focus on earlier time periods, and discuss encounter along political as well as spiritual lines. For example Timothy Pearson, “Reading Rituals: Performance and Religious Encounter in

depicts Indigenous Christians as less authentic, and the need for Indigenous Christianity to be more adequately addressed within the broader historiography of Indigenous history. Like Robertson and several of the authors in the *Mixed Blessings* collection I recognize the potential political contingency of Christianity for Indigenous people historically, but also seek to create space to engage with the range of beliefs (including Christian) that Jacob Estralshenen and other Elders have shared with me. In my efforts to acknowledge the Indigeneity of Indigenous Christians, it is important that I not dismiss the significance of their Christian faith and the ways that faith may also inform their historical consciousness.⁷⁶

In addition to studies of conversion and those focusing on individual Indigenous Christians, scholarship addressing Indigenous encounters with Christianity has tended to focus on the history of Indian Residential Schools.⁷⁷ Recent scholarship on residential schools has been

Early Colonial Northeastern North America”; Elizabeth Elbourne, “Managing Alliance, Negotiating Christianity: Haudenosaunee Uses of Anglicanism in Northeastern North America, 1760s-1830s”; Cecilia Morgan, “‘The Joy my Heart has Experienced’: Eliza Field Jones and the Transatlantic Missionary World, 1830s-40s”; Jean-François Bélisle and Nicole St-Onge, “Between García Moreno and Chan Santa Cruz: Riel and the Métis Rebellions” The three final papers of the collection consider contemporary encounter focusing on theology or personal experiences to frame their narratives. Some of Carmen Lansdowne’s observations as a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation and an ordained United Church minister on her own efforts to negotiate her Christianity and come to terms with the violent history of Christianity complement my work in northwestern Saskatchewan. See Carmen Lansdowne, “Autoethnography that Breaks Your Heart: Or What Does an Interdisciplinarian Do When What She Was Hoping for Simply Isn’t There?”; See also, Denise Nadeau, “Decolonizing Religious Encounter? Teaching ‘Indigenous Traditions, Women, and Colonialism’”; Sipiwe Dube, “Aporia, Atrocity, and Religion in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.”

⁷⁶ During my interviews, community members have used references to Dene, Cree, and Métis stories as well as Catholic in explaining the history of their community’s as well as their own life experiences. I was made aware of this early on in my work in Ile-a-la-Crosse. One of the first community members who I tried to interview about appearances of Mary at a farm outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse did not want to talk with me, because I explained the project in terms of Indigenous spirituality, rather than Roman Catholicism. I was informed that they did not practice or know anything about that. Even though I did not interview them, I shared a copy of my *Saskatchewan History* article, where they explained aspects of their views of Mary’s appearances at the farm and their responsibilities to their community within a Catholic context. Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁷⁷ In 1996 J.R. Miller drew attention to the role of the Churches in running residential schools, as well as the perspectives of the Churches on that history. He has more recently drawn attention to the role of the Churches in the apology and reconciliation processes. Other scholarship has tended to provide less space for Christianity within the context of the schools, though more recently scholarship by historians such as Emma Bartell-Lowman is once again drawing attention to Indigenous agency in nineteenth century religious-education encounters. Again, these discussions have yet to extend into considerations of Indigenous Christianity during the twentieth century. J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); J.R. Miller, “Dealing with Residential School Survivors: Reconciliation in International Perspective,” *Australasian Canadian Studies*, 26, no. 1 (2008); J.R. Miller, “We Are Sorry” The Canadian Government Apology for Residential Schooling,” *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society*, 46, no. 2 (Spring 2009); Emma Bartell Lowman, “Mamook Kom’tax Chinuk Pipa/ Learning to Write Chinook Jargon: Indigenous Peoples and Literacy Strategies in the South Central Interior of British Columbia in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Historical Studies in Education* 29, no. 1 (2017): pp. 77-98; Thomas Peace, “Borderlands, Primary Sources, and the Longue Durée: Contextualizing Colonial Schooling at Odanak, Lorette, and Kahnawake, 1600-1850,” *Historical Studies in Education*, 29 no. 1 (2017): 8-31.

profoundly affected by the changing context within Canada given the work of survivors to share their stories, the IRSSA, Prime Minister Harper's apology, and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The findings and reports of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenge Canadian historiography to acknowledge Canadian residential school policies and practices as acts of cultural genocide.⁷⁸ However, the final reports of the TRC positioned Christianity as oppositional to Indigeneity. In this way, even though Christianity has informed how some Survivors make sense of their experiences and efforts at healing, this is missing in the reports of the TRC. What is most troubling is the treatment of those labeled Metis survivors in *Volume Three* of the final report, that problematically equates "Metisness" with mixedness and uses the Christianity of Metis students to dismiss their experiences of the same genocidal policies and processes that the TRC noted in its treatment of recognized schools.⁷⁹ My work recognizes that residential schools were acts of cultural genocide, but critiques the TRC's treatment of the Metis in *Volume Three*. More generally, I suggest the need to consider the history of residential schools within a broader history of Indigenous Catholicism, beyond the roles of Churches as administrators of the schools.

Beyond studies focusing on conversion, individual Indigenous Christians, or residential schools and the associated IRSSA, Indigenous engagements with Christianity are typically excluded from academic scholarship. Christianity, if discussed at all, is often presented as oppositional to Indigeneity particularly for those who are seeking to decolonize.⁸⁰ Much of the

⁷⁸ See for example the foundational works by J.R. Miller and John Milloy. J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*; John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). More recently scholars such as Ian Mosby have drawn attention to the violence at schools in the form of experiments that were conducted on students, see Ian Mosby "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952" *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XLVI, No. 91 (Mai/May 2013), pp. 615-642. There is a growing body of scholarship on the apology and reconciliation in Canada. See for example, J.R. Miller, "Dealing with Residential School Survivors"; J.R. Miller, "'We Are Sorry'" The Canadian Government Apology for Residential Schooling; Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015); Sipiwe Dube, "Aporia, Atrocity, and Religion in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," *Mixed Blessings*, pp: 145-163.

⁷⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939 to 2000*; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 3* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

⁸⁰ For example, Dr. Howard Adams wrote his influential *Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native Point of View* describing the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada and applying calls for decolonization to a Canadian context in 1975. This is a significant piece of scholarship, particularly in terms of the popular social

scholarship that has inspired this dissertation in its attention to the complexities of Indigenous engagement with colonial systems ignores Christianity.⁸¹ This results in scholarship on a range of topics from capitalist and wage labour economics to liberal democratic politics that is able to ignore the significance of both the institution of the Church as well as the potential faith of Indigenous Christians.⁸² Scholars seem to have more difficulty reconciling Indigenous Christianity than Indigenous participation in economic systems or politics, indicating narrow understandings of both Christianity and Indigeneity. While some of the community members I have worked with see Christianity as colonial and oppositional to Indigeneity, there are others I have worked with, particularly Elders, who have different understandings of both Indigeneity and Catholicism.

My community engaged work with Elders like Jacob and Tony provide my academic entrée to complicating understandings of Indigeneity, colonization, decolonization, and reconciliation. By engaging with how people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak understand the Catholic history of their communities, I complicate existing scholarly and contemporary conversations that tend to emphasize dichotomies and narrow interpretations of what it can mean to be Indigenous, where these existing conversations tend to leave out the seemingly contradictory aspects of human experience. My use of the term Indigeneity builds on historian Keith Thor Carlson's observation that "too often the racial and or/ethnic issues of Aboriginal-newcomer history work to obscure important class and/or status and gender issues within

attitudes in Canada as well as scholarly trends within Canadian history that it was challenging. Adams was involved in the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse in the early 1970s, advocating his notions of colonization and decolonization to young Metis political leaders that positioned decolonization as oppositional to the Church. However, the resulting movement was a cause of conflict within the Roman Catholic community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. This on the ground complexity of Indigenous Catholicism is missing in Adams' influential work that equates Christianity with being colonized. Scholars writing about Indigenous political organizing and efforts at decolonizing have built upon Adams' work, and there is a continuing tendency for both scholarship about decolonization and historical scholarship considering these processes to ignore Indigenous Christianity. See for example, Dr. Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Toronto: General Pub, 1975); See also, Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014). I focus on Indigenous Catholicism and decolonization in chapters six and seven.

⁸¹ Much of the scholarship that has inspired this dissertation continues to ignore Indigenous Christianity, particularly during the twentieth century. See for example, Lutz, *Makúk*; Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*.

⁸² My point here echoes Sergei Kan's observation over twenty years ago and more recently Bradford and Horton's discussion of the continued peripheral state of Indigenous Christianity in Canadian historiography. Kan, "Clan Mothers to Godmothers," p. 631; Bradford and Horton, "Introduction," p. 4.

Indigenous society.”⁸³ While my analysis does not focus explicitly on class or gender as primary categories of analysis, it echoes Carlson’s call to pay attention to differences within Indigenous communities. Here I further benefit from social historian Ramsey Cook’s early concerns with the essentializing nature of the term ‘identity’ and critique of the hardening of various categories such as gender, class, and race. Cook provides important reminders that identities are multiple, relational, and shifting.⁸⁴ This relates to my efforts to create space for Indigenous Christianity while recognizing the multitude of legitimate ways that people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak have engaged and rejected Catholicism, drawing attention to the many relational and shifting spiritual identities and communities within Indigenous northwest Saskatchewan. I do not set out to define what is and is not Indigenous, but rather to create space for the various understandings from within the communities I have worked.

Chris Andersen convincingly shows how the preoccupation with Metis as “mixed” comes from older notions of race that continue to be reinforced by our legal and political systems.⁸⁵ Implicit in the focus on mixedness in historical and recent definitions of Metis is the erasure or failure to recognize the fact that mixing is a part of all nations and groups including other Indigenous peoples like the Cree and Dene.⁸⁶ This emphasis on mixedness extends to how the Catholic faith of Metis students at residential schools has been interpreted by the TRC in *Volume Three* to dismiss “Metis” experiences as less than those of First Nations students who attended schools recognized in the Settlement Agreement.⁸⁷ Building on Anderson’s scholarship I posit that this racialization of mixing can be pushed further to reveal how, ahistorically, Indigenous

⁸³ Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 29.

⁸⁴ My approach benefits from Canadian historians’ preoccupation with questions of identity. Ramsay Cook’s discussion in “Identities are not like Hats” Ramsay Cook, “Identities Are Not Like Hats,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, 2 (2000), p. 264. Cook explains, “identities are not essential but contingent, constructed and deconstructed by changing historical circumstances. They are relational not autonomous.” My study also builds on more specific studies of identity/community building such as, Kerry Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community and Identity in Northeastern Ontario* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006). Abel defines community as a process and something that is imagined.

⁸⁵ Here I build on Andersen’s concerns about the racialized aspects of the concept of hybridity, particularly when applied to Metis people who have already been racialized as mixed, and literary scholar Kristina (Fagan) Bidwell’s critique that the term is based on the assumption of two pure and authentic cultures. In my discussion of Indigenous Catholicism, I am working to challenge racialized notions of authenticity to consider the range of understandings community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak have of Catholicism and Indigeneity. Andersen, “*Métis*,” pp. 36-41; Kristina Fagan, “Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo: Storytelling, Humour, and Trauma in the Fiction of Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 34.1 (2009): 221.

⁸⁶ Andersen, “*Métis*.”

⁸⁷ Most recently evident in *Volume Three* of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*.

Christianity has been uniquely equated with mixedness, and is seen as inauthentic and less Indigenous than other expressions of Indigenous spirituality.

Despite the strength of the post-colonial scholarship highlighting the role of hybridity and syncretism in more nuanced understandings of Indigenous engagements with colonialism, labeling Indigenous Catholicism as the product of mixing or syncretism risks reproducing colonial mentalities and racialized views of what it means to be Indigenous or Catholic. As such, I assert that we must consider the variety of ways people describe and negotiate their faith and their experiences with Catholicism, leaving space for ambiguity. This means recognizing the often-conflicted relationships people have with the institution of the Catholic Church, individuals who represent the Church in historical contexts, and the Catholic faith. Conflicted relationships are partly due to experiences at residential schools and the roles of priests in dismissing and banning aspects of Indigenous cultures and even aspects of Catholic Indigenous faith, as well as the significance of community and family histories of being Catholic. This is a history of genocide and colonialism, often relating to the power of the Church in the north that sits alongside sincere expressions of Catholic faith and a sense of belonging to a Catholic community both historically and today.

In this way, the following chapters complicate understandings of processes that loom large in Indigenous history and Indigenous Studies. They suggest the range of experiences and perspectives within communities, cautioning us against reducing everything to Indigeneity in Indigenous histories, and at the same time highlighting the significance of gender, age, class, faith, and life stories. Local stories about Catholicism from northwest Saskatchewan contribute to our understandings of a range of historical topics locally and nationally, including understandings of 1885, treaty and scrip negotiations, the functioning of colonialism in the provincial north, Indigenous political organizing, healing, revitalizing Indigenous spiritual practices, the IRSSA, and reconciliation. The lens of Catholicism connects historical topics typically considered separately, complicating earlier historiographical discussions.

In addition to the historical and historiographical questions, the stories shared with me by Jacob and Tony raise methodological issues for historians pursuing community-engaged work. It is useful to return again to Jacob's words about outsiders, in particular his observation that when "somebody asks us questions or we tell a story, they won't believe what happened,"⁸⁸ and Tony's

⁸⁸ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

call to consider the “story before the story.” Given the context of my conversations with these two men, where I was asking questions for my doctoral research, it is not a stretch to interpret their words to serve as a caution for myself as an historian. A focus on historical consciousness and oral history methodologies, and particularly interviews, form the basis for my doctoral work. I will now sketch out my research process as well as some of the influences and limitations that fundamentally affect this work.

My scholarly approach to this community engaged project includes a consideration of historical consciousness and draws on oral history, ethnohistory, and Indigenous research methodologies. I understand historical consciousness to be individual and collective understandings of the past, the cognitive and cultural factors that shape those understandings, as well as the relations of historical understandings to those of the present and future.”⁸⁹ Typically studies considering historical consciousness are in the realm of history education focusing on non-Indigenous communities and western understandings of what constitutes historical knowledge. My approach differs in that I do not seek to correct local historical consciousness but rather to engage with it on its own terms to consider how and why people interpret what they know about the past in light of multiple sources and multiple ways of knowing. Here my work builds on that of Keith Thor Carlson, whose book, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, is the only monograph length study to consider Indigenous historical consciousness in order to understand the ways that communities use their histories to make sense of changing circumstances.⁹⁰ In this context, considering Indigenous historical consciousness complements anthropologist Julie Cruikshank’s call to treat “oral tradition not as evidence, but as a window on the ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed in different contexts.”⁹¹ Carlson’s use of

⁸⁹ Sharon Macdonald and Katja Fausser, “Towards European Historical Consciousness” in *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness*, ed. S. Macdonald (Hamburg: Koerber Stiftung, 2000), p. 10, as quoted in Peter Seixas, “Introduction,” *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, edited by Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p.10.

⁹⁰ More generally my work is informed by Carlson’s approach. Carlson employs R.G. Collingwood’s *Idea of History*, makes use of Sahlins’ event/structure dialectic and pays attention to historical consciousness. My work devotes more attention to historical consciousness as defined above. Marshall Sahlins, “The Return of the Event, Again; With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War of 1843 to 1855 between the Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa,” in *Clio in Oceania: Towards a Historical Anthropology*, ed. Aletta Biersack (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). pp. 45, 81-82; Sahlins, *With Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁹¹ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, p. 347. Similarly, Neal McLeod has drawn attention to the multiple meanings of oral histories within communities, explaining, “ Oral traditions are dynamic and can have different meanings in the same community. Oral cultures are multi-layered, but so are written ones; there is constant play among different layers of understanding. These stories are embodied memory, and they profoundly influence how

historical consciousness complements his broader ethnohistorical approach that requires scholars to explore not only the story of Indigenous people in newcomer history but also the saga of newcomers in multiple Indigenous histories—recognizing that sometimes, despite what newcomers may assume, Indigenous history need not be concerned with newcomers at all.⁹² Similarly, my approach to this topic is shaped less by a desire to describe Dene and Cree/Metis history, and more by an aspiration to engage with and interpret the way the people of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak have themselves historicized events and stories associated with Catholicism, colonization and decolonization.⁹³

My consideration of Indigenous historical consciousness is informed by scholarship on oral history and Indigenous research methodologies. Oral historians have devoted attention to the form of narratives interlocutors share, particularly those relating to trauma, as well as how people choose to tell and not tell stories that they see conflicting with accepted historical narratives (collective or national ways of making sense of the past or national historical consciousness).⁹⁴ For my study, the shifting national narrative around residential schools has both created space for people to speak openly about abuse and to critique the Church, but also hindered others from sharing positive recountings of Christianity. The exclusion of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse from this process has further shaped how survivors of that school make sense of their experiences. Literary scholars and scholars working within Indigenous studies have also drawn attention to the use of humour to address traumatic and difficult topics.⁹⁵ Within the context of my own interviews, humour has often been used to address conflict, and the more colonial aspects of

we live and understand our lives.” Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, p. 72.

⁹² In this way, his work is more of the ethnohistory that anthropologist Raymond Fogelson has been calling for since the 1970s. Raymond Fogelson, “On the Varieties of Indian History: Sequoyah and Traveler Bird,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* (1974); See also Jay Miller, “Tsimshian Ethno-Ethnohistory: A “Real” Indigenous Chronology,” *Ethnohistory*, 45, 4 (1998).

⁹³ I have also been inspired by the insights of scholars of Oceania who have linked their local studies to broader processes of change. Notably, my conceptualization of this project has been influenced by the scholarship of anthropologists Nicholas Thomas and Martha Kaplan to look at places in between that are neither completely Indigenous nor colonial, recognize the coexistence of multiple (at times contradictory) perspectives, and attempt to move away from dichotomies. Nicolas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Harvard University Press, 1991); Martha Kaplan, *Neither Cargo Nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination In Fiji* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1995). Kaplan draws attention to the need for scholars to recognize multiple perspectives and narratives.

⁹⁴ See for example, Alistair Thomson, “Anzac Memories,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2006). pp. 244-254.

⁹⁵ Bidwell has written about the use of Indigenous humour in literary contexts. See Kristina Fagan, “Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo”; Similarly Neal McLeod has noted the significance of humour within Cree storytelling as a form of survival and resistance McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, pp. 61-62.

people's histories. My role as a non-Catholic, non-Indigenous, visibly white woman, conducting interviews for a dissertation about Indigenous stories of Catholicism has affected the stories that people chose to share with me, and how they share them. Some stories are whispered, or alluded to, rather than shared openly in formal interview settings, and others are presented as jokes. I have worked hard to not equate silence or gaps with absences – especially considering the well-documented trauma that took place in residential schools in Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Those who work with survivors of genocide in other contexts, as well as trauma more generally have worked to define and problematize terms like memory, trauma, testimony, and even story and narrative.⁹⁶ Renowned oral historian Henry Greenspan explains “I have spent a lot of time trying to understand the ways survivors do attempt to “make stories” for what is “not a story;” how they contend with their frustration; and how they create, and recurrently re-create, the compromised narratives that emerge.”⁹⁷ Central to this observation is his challenge to the idea that survivor stories are “a fixed and finished account,”⁹⁸ as well as the need for us to consider what experiences can even be communicated to outsiders.⁹⁹ At times I refer the information shared with me by community members as stories or narratives, but also use the more general terms ‘retellings’ and ‘recountings,’ recognizing that not all interviewees have established narratives of the events and issues they discuss.¹⁰⁰ This may be due to trauma, but also relates to whether or not they have shared a particular experience before and had the chance to establish a narrative form for their retelling. The following provides glimpses of community experiences and local understandings of Catholicism, but is also contextual and inherently incomplete and unfinished.¹⁰¹

Greenspan has suggested that the term ‘testimony’ is too specific to be a foundational concept for those who work with survivors of genocide, because of the legal aspects of providing

⁹⁶ Henry Greenspan, “From Testimony to Recounting: Reflections from Forty Years of Listening to Holocaust Survivors” in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, edited by Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

⁹⁷ Henry Greenspan, “Afterword,” in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, edited by Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), p. 354.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 354.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 353.

¹⁰⁰ Greenspan favours the term accounts and the gerunds recounting and retelling. Greenspan, “From Testimony to Recounting,” p. 162

¹⁰¹ Indigenous Studies scholar Neal McLeod has noted the inherent incompleteness of efforts to engage with Cree narrative memory, writing, “No story is complete in itself. Anyone who attempts to link various pieces of stories together into a larger story is always limited. There are always details of stories which we may not know and which we will learn in time.” McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, p. 8.

testimony and the requirement to provide as definitive an account as possible of what a witness has witnessed. To Greenspan, this particular form of survivors' recounting is rare.¹⁰² I only use the term 'testimony' in chapter eight to refer to testimony by survivors before the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. In contrast to the formalized context of testimony, Greenspan and others have demonstrated a need for scholarship to move beyond testimony and towards 'sustained conversations' between scholar and survivor, citing the danger of excluding the personhood of survivors or reducing survivors to eyewitness testimony.¹⁰³ Greenspan's call for sustained conversations parallels those of Keith Carlson and others seeking to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing. An effort is made throughout this study to situate stories shared by community members within their life histories and to engage with local analysis and interpretations of their histories. While relationship building has been an important component of my community-engaged process, my work with only a select few individuals has truly approached the goal of what I consider to be 'sustained conversations.'

The following chapters are based on semi-structured recorded interviews as well as my observations and field notes from time spent in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. Conversations during the recorded interviews typically started with me asking the person to tell me about him or herself. Interviews often focused on one or two of the specific historical figures or events discussed in this dissertation, as well as community members' own experiences with Catholicism. Those I interviewed often led the conversation, but some required more specific questions. In many ways, the formal interviews were the least important aspect of my community engagement, as time spent getting to know people and their communities has informed my interpretation of those interviews.

I was introduced to the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse as an undergraduate research assistant in 2006 when I interviewed community members about appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the community for a Community University Research Alliance (CURA) funded project. I returned to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2010, and was struck by the change in some of the public conversations relating to the Church since Prime Minister Harper's apology and the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the IRSSA – suggesting a shift in local historical consciousness

¹⁰² Greenspan, "From Testimony to Recounting."

¹⁰³ Henry Greenspan, "Afterword," *Beyond Testimony and Trauma*, p. 351. In a different context, historian Keith Carlson has emphasized the need for ethnohistorians to engage in sustained conversations with the Indigenous communities and interlocutors that they work with. See Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place*.

in just a four-year period. In 2011, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the town council to begin my dissertation research and explore that shift. The following year, I signed an MOU with the English River First Nation to add a comparative element to the project and broaden the perspectives I would be able to include. The result is nearly forty recorded interviews (including those I conducted in 2006).¹⁰⁴ In addition to my work in Ile-la-Crosse and Patuanak I attended the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage with Liz Durocher, a community member who I have grown close to over the years, and her family in 2012 and 2013.

In addition to the interviews I have conducted as well as my own field notes and observations, I incorporate published and unpublished recountings of local memories and ethnographic sources. In particular, I rely on the field notes of anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa and his wife and co-researcher, ethnoarchaeologist Hettie Joe Brunback, who conducted fieldwork in Patuanak during the 1970s, as well as interviews conducted with individuals in Ile-la-Crosse available through the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI). Former chief of the English River, Ralph Paul also shared with me a copy of his unpublished memoir about his time at Beauval Indian Residential School, as well as memories of his childhood and knowledge of local histories. I draw extensively from Chief Paul's memoir in the following chapters. I also draw on Elders' stories published in *Voice of the Elders* by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in 2006. The collection includes stories by many Elders in Patuanak, including individuals who I have interviewed. Beyond these main sources for community voices, I incorporate excerpts from published interviews conducted by the Office of the Treaty Commission as well as testimony from meetings during the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the Final Reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Newspapers have provided additional means to access community perspectives. These sources allow me to incorporate perspectives beyond the individuals and families I have been able to work with, and help to show shifting historical consciousness throughout the community both in formal and informal settings.

I include archival sources for context, though archival research has not been the focus of this work, nor is it being used to triangulate and corroborate the oral sources. A comprehensive examination and analysis of all possible archival sources would be beyond the scope of this project. Rather, archival sources from government, oblates, and the Metis Society of

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix B for copies of research agreements and consent forms, as well as sample questions. I have not incorporated all of the interviews I conducted into this dissertation.

Saskatchewan (MSS) are at times used to supplement the stories I have been able to gather, especially for the case studies referring to earlier time periods where there were fewer stories and memories that I was able to record.

Ideally, a scholar working in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse would have command not only of the English language but also Cree, Michif, Dene, and French. I do not. This has meant I have been unable to interview certain people in their first language, and have had to rely on the generosity of their family members and other community members to serve as translators. I recognize that even Elders who are relatively comfortable being interviewed in English may not be able to fully explain stories and their perspectives in that language. Still, I bring a commitment to conducting sensitive and respectful community-engaged scholarship to the project, and a concerted effort to work with community members to incorporate their perspectives (while recognizing our communication barriers). I do not claim to speak for the individuals I have worked with, but to share my understandings of the stories they have shared with me. To do this I draw heavily from what Keith Carlson defines as ethnohistory, oral history, social history, and Indigenous Studies, as well as conversations around best practices in community engagement.¹⁰⁵ To these ends, I have set out to produce work that engages directly with community perspectives, is mutually beneficial, and is fundamentally relational. This work is subjective, and involves the co-creation of knowledge and stories through the interviewing process. However, fundamentally the research goes beyond the particular interviews to include efforts at developing relationships with community members. Getting to know some of the

¹⁰⁵ Carlson, *The Power of Place*; Carlson, "Reflections on Indigenous History and Memory: Reconstructing and Reconsidering Contact," in John Lutz, ed., *Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous- European Contact* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Clifford Geertz, "Thick Descriptions: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *Interpretation of Cultures, Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*; Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*; Julie Cruikshank, "Notes and comments: Oral tradition and oral history--reviewing some issues," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 75, 3, (1994), pp. 403-418; Allesandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 32-42; Valerie Yow, "'Do I like them too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa," in Perks, et al eds. *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 54-7; Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," in Perks et al. ed. *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 261-270; Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories." In Perks et al ed. *The Oral History Reader*. pp. 244-254; Katherine Borland "'That's Not what I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research." In Perks et al. eds. *The Oral History Reader*. pp. 310-322; Ann Laura Stoler, with Karen Strassler "Memory Work in Java: A Cautionary Tale," In Perks et al eds. *The Oral History Reader*, pp. 283-309; Greenspan, "From Testimony to Recounting"; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson, "Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part 3"; See also Winona Wheeler, "Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral History," in *Walking a Tight Rope: Aboriginal People and their Representations*, edited by Ute Kischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2005).

people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse and simply spending time in northwest Saskatchewan has been essential to my research process.

My approach to working with Indigenous Elders and communities is influenced by the scholarship of Indigenous studies scholar Winona Wheeler, and her insistence that learning from Indigenous Elders requires a relationship (rather than a one-off interview), and that teaching often takes place while actively doing things (rather than in formal interview settings).¹⁰⁶ She indicated that this is often done by working alongside Elders, providing the example of chopping wood. I read this article in preparation for my visit to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, so approached my work with the idea that building relationships and getting to know the community and individuals would be key to a successful project. Initially, I was somewhat naïve about this process, viewing it as a step in a checklist to achieve a successful interview, rather than long-term commitments that held the potential to fundamentally change the research process – both the work done in the community and how I interpret and write about the histories that have been shared.

Over the past ten years I have realized how complex a relational approach to history can be, and my experiences have raised methodological questions about what this type of research actually entails. I have volunteered at several community events – often working in the kitchen or helping with clean up. I have given individuals rides to appointments, babysat, and worked on community mapping projects. I bring groceries, and homemade gifts such as jam, or other canning to interviews. I have also brought tobacco when appropriate.

My efforts to build relationships have also included missteps, uncertainty, and mistakes on my part, not all of which led to greater understanding. Trying to get to know people and build relationships has at times been interpreted differently than I intended, and I have struggled to navigate local community politics and dynamics. Perhaps most significantly is the time spent away from Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse and unfulfilled promises for follow up conversations. While I have stayed in touch more regularly with some of the people I have worked with, this has not been consistent. I was twenty-one during my original trips to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, and my early approach to oral history and community engagement work was at times naïve. During the eleven years since, I have changed, as have my approaches to community engaged work.

¹⁰⁶ Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson, “Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part 3”; See also Wheeler, Winona. “Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral History.”; Other scholars have noted the necessity of relationships in Indigenous research methods. See for example: McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*.

While I have gotten to know some community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak very well, staying in their homes when I visit, and hosting them at my house when they are in Saskatoon, there are others that I have only met with once or twice. There are also community members who I have not formally interviewed but have spent time with and learned from. This work includes significant gaps because there are people I was not able to work with and perspectives that are missing. Even though I can access some of this information through earlier interviews, online collections, and the field notes of others – they are devoid of a personal connection or story that helps me to understand them. The relationships I have built with individuals and community members vary considerably and have changed over time. Financial and time constraints have meant that my trips to the communities have been sporadic, and have included lengthy absences. Email, Facebook, and text messages as well as occasional visits in Saskatoon have allowed me to stay in touch with some individuals. Several of the people I have worked with early on have passed away making key follow up conversations impossible. I have made annual trips to Ile-a-la-Crosse since completing my interviews in 2014, but have not been back to Patuanak since then.

Some community members who were centrally involved in the events and stories I have described did not want to participate in this project. The more time I have spent visiting Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, the more aware I have become of the many perspectives and stories that I have not been able to include. I say this not to downplay my contributions, but rather to contextualize my scholarship, and take care that as an outsider I do not overstate my arguments or findings. While I am framing this work as a consideration of Indigenous historical consciousness, it is always limited by what people felt comfortable sharing with me as an outsider historian. The context of speaking to a researcher, even one with whom relationships have been developed, differs from how stories would be shared in other local and familial contexts. Furthermore, I recognize that there are aspects of people's lives and stories that I may be unable to fully and appropriately comprehend, especially as those stories relate to experiences of genocide and trauma. As historian Joy Parr emphasizes, all we can do is witness the witnesses¹⁰⁷ and be cautious about the claims to knowledge we make as outsider academics. As

¹⁰⁷Joy Parr, "Don't Speak for Me: Practicing Oral History Amidst the Legacies of Conflict," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2010), pp. 1-11.

an academic dissertation this work strives to make scholarly arguments and contributions, but I hope to do so from a place of transparency and humility.¹⁰⁸

Increasingly, scholarship has emphasized scholars' work with community members as co-creators of knowledge, who share authority, and are potentially co-authors of the final written product.¹⁰⁹ I have made an effort to question my academic authority and recognize the knowledge of the community members I have been privileged to work with. The co-creating of knowledge for this project has been limited to the research stage, and the community has been absent from the bulk of the writing process. My interviews have been semi-structured or unstructured. At times I have asked people interpretive/analytic questions, though the bulk of my attention was on seeing what stories they wanted to share (relating to the broader topic) and recording those stories. To this end, the interpretation and analysis of those stories remains my own, and may not be representative of the myriad of ways that community members would interpret their stories.

Although many scholars working with Indigenous knowledge keepers now recognize the centrality of relationships to their community engaged work, there is relatively little discussion of what those relationships actually entail, especially around the variety of relationships that we might form, as well as how those relationships may change over time.¹¹⁰ There is a need to be more explicit about the role of community engagement throughout the research process, rather than vague reflexive references to relationship building, followed by little indication about what our interpretation and analysis is based on. Unlike an archival-based scholarship, it would be difficult for other academics to access my sources and assess my interpretation. It is therefore paramount that attention be given to describing the research process, situating who the storytellers are, and distinguishing between their voices and my interpretation. This effort is apparent in my use of quotations to distinguish what my interlocutors have said from my interpretation. I have also provided more detailed introductions to the individuals I have worked with and described our work together in Appendix A. Too often, the process of community

¹⁰⁸ Neal McLeod's observation of humility within Cree culture has resonated with me. He explains, "the greatest Cree storytellers often said, "moya mistahi e-kiskeyohtaman" (I do not know much)" I would have to say "nama kikway e-kiskeyihtaman (I know nothing)." McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ See for example, Michael Frisch *Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning Oral and Public History*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990); Recent examples of work that make efforts to share authority and authorship include, Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan in *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*.

¹¹⁰ See for example Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan in *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*.

engagement remains opaque in academic work, and relations with communities seem to be invoked to leverage and increase academic authority.¹¹¹

I consider these vague descriptions of academic relations with Indigenous community in the pursuit of academic research to be a reflexive trope— a problematic *defacto* solution to colonialism in the academy. More attention must be paid to how the various inter-subjectivities influence the research process, and more space is needed in community engaged academic work for vulnerability, humility, and to identify the gaps and limits in our work and interpretations.¹¹² Throughout this dissertation, I will contextualize the individuals who have shared stories with me, as well as the spaces in which formal and informal conversations took place. This of course is my own recounting of our encounters, and my perspective may differ from those of the individuals I have worked with. I work to distinguish my voice and process from those of my interlocutors, and acknowledge places where I am uncertain of how narratives fit together. Similarly I include histories and narratives that are important to the individuals with whom I have worked, even if they sit uncomfortably with the rest of the dissertation and the argument that I have created.

The following chapters more deeply consider the variety of ways that Indigenous people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse negotiate the Catholic history of their communities while I attempt to be open about my research practice and demonstrate a thorough recounting of my community engagement. I recognize the knowledge of Elders who identify as Catholic, and the significance of their Catholic faith in making sense of their world. I also recognize that community members experienced cultural genocide and abuse at schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval, and while some have found healing through Catholicism, others have left the Church of their parents and grandparents. The following considers a shift from a time when everyone in these communities belonged to a Catholic community by the virtue of their baptism to what it means to be a historically Catholic community. Yet, rather than a simple narrative of moving

¹¹¹ Examples of this include my own previous work, as well as much of the work I have cited above. Even though the reflexive turn in anthropology has resulted in more attention to the research process, and in positioning the author, this tends to remain quite vague. Furthermore, work that is more open about research and writing processes tends to be written later in scholars career. So while scholars like Basso, Cruikshank, Greenspan, Robertson, and Carlson inspire by approach and ideals, I have not spent decades working in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. To this end, it is necessary that I write about my process differently than more senior scholars.

¹¹² My thoughts here are inspired by Joy Parr, Don't Speak for Me: Practicing Oral History Amidst the Legacies of Conflict." and Neal Mcleod, *Cree Narrative Memory*.

away from the Church there is continuity as well as change in how people have defied Church authorities and in how Catholicism and Indigeneity continue to be negotiated.

Chapters two and three take the stories of Willow Heart, a Dene prophet who assisted the priests when they first arrived, as a starting point to consider the increasing power of the Catholic Church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in northwestern Saskatchewan and the shifting and varying ways that local Dene, Cree, and Metis people of today make sense of this history. With the Willow Heart story as a bridge, these chapters consider local understandings of the Riel Resistance in 1885 as well as the Treaty/Scrip Commission in 1906. In chapter two I argue that historical consciousness varies within communities, particularly across generations because of differing personal histories, in particular at residential schools, but also because of differing local understandings of what constitutes Catholicism and Indigeneity. In chapter three I argue that the power of the Church had increased by 1906 because of its role as a provider of relief in the north and the sincere Catholic faith of parishioners. As a result, Church officials played significant roles in the Treaty Ten/Scrip Commission that has resulted in an artificial division within the region according to status. National identities in part associated with legal status at times sit in tension with local histories, but can also be meaningful to some in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak today.

Chapters four and five concentrate on stories of Father Louis Moraud to explore the complicated relations between local belief in Moraud as a missionary saint and his role in northern colonialism, contributing to my argument that the spiritual power of the priests and the Church reinforced their political power. These chapters also consider what it meant for local Cree, Metis and Dene to belong to a Catholic community during Moraud's time as priest (1916-1965), revealing that for community members at that time having a strong Catholic faith did not necessitate being deferential to Church authorities, even though that is how some people today understand the faith of earlier generations. Local historical consciousness of Moraud tends to focus on either his sainthood, revealing the significance of Catholicism in how some community members make sense of their past, or by evaluating him according to a narrower definition of Indigeneity, focusing on his roles promoting Indigenous languages and "protecting" the community rather than the faith aspects of his life and work.

Moving from the complexities of colonialism to those of decolonization, chapters six and seven consider the takeover of the school from the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s as

well as the variety of ways that people have continued to negotiate their Catholic faith. I posit that while the early 1970s brought an era of more open conversations, critiques, and negotiations around the role of Catholicism in the colonizing and decolonizing processes, positioning Ile-a-la-Crosse as a historically Catholic community is necessary to make sense of the local conflicts that resulted from the takeover. Individual decisions to continue to belong to the local Catholic community or to move away from it are complicated by a continuing negotiation between these two extremes, and can be understood by the varying life histories and positionalities of community members, as well as how they understand Catholicism and Indigeneity.

Chapter eight looks at local stories around the omission of the residential school at Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement to consider what happens when a community is excluded from the reconciliation process.¹¹³ In some ways this chapter marks a shift from earlier chapters in its focus on politics and abuse at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. However, this chapter represents one of the most important aspects of this dissertation to the people in Ile-a-la-Crosse with whom I have worked. The uneasy way that this chapter fits with earlier chapters further illustrates the complexity of Indigenous engagement with Catholicism that challenges a single narrative, and more generally suggests how local historical consciousness is informed by the political context of the Settlement Agreement. From my first visit to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, to conducting many of the interviews for this dissertation between 2012 and 2014 I observed a shift in the way people discussed the school and Catholicism more generally. Experiences at residential schools and more contemporary efforts at reconciliation are raised in earlier chapters as they relate to local understandings of historical events. This chapter picks up those themes in its more detailed discussion of the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school. Within the current context, exacerbated by the narrow framing of reconciliation and Catholicism by the TRC, there is a hardening of views amongst some community members that see Catholicism and Indigeneity as oppositional, contrasting with earlier generations who were able to problematize aspects of the Church but for whom being Catholic was a significant part of their identity.

¹¹³ In this dissertation I equate the reconciliation process with the Settlement Agreement and resulting apology, Common Experience payment, Independent Assessment Process, and most significantly the work of the TRC. While reconciliation is certainly not limited to these processes, the TRC in particular (and the public attention it has received) has come to dominate discourse at multiple levels about reconciliation.

This chapter makes note of the significant shifts in local historical consciousness and concepts of Indigeneity as they relate to the apology, the work of the TRC, and the shifting national narrative of Canada's residential school history. I critique the TRC's treatment of the Metis as mixed in *Volume Three* of their final report, arguing that their emphasis on mixedness extends to how the Catholic faith of students is interpreted and at times used to dismiss Metis experiences. I argue that a deeper engagement with the Catholic histories of Indigenous communities in northwest Saskatchewan as well as the varying ways that community members continue to negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity is needed in efforts at reconciliation, and the scholarship on that process.

Remembering Willow Heart: Negotiating Catholicism, 1846-1906

“It [Catholicism] was our lives, that was what we believed. Maybe it’s right or maybe it’s wrong, I don’t know, nobody knows, nobody’s seen it.”¹

-Jacob Estralshenan

“My mom tends to tell it the Catholic way. I’d tell it my way, the right way.”²

-Bernie Eaglechild

This section is about both the deployment of power by the Catholic Church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in northwestern Saskatchewan and the shifting and varying ways that local Dene, Cree, and Metis people make sense of this history. The above quotations provide two perspectives of the history of Catholicism in English River First Nation (Patuanak). To Elder Jacob Estralshenan, Catholicism “was our lives” and “what we believed,” even though he acknowledges that nobody knows if this belief is right or wrong since it is not based on something people have personally witnessed. The deep history of Catholicism for his community and in his personal life is a significant factor. In other parts of our interview Jacob discussed his personal Catholic faith, though throughout our conversation he was clear about the historical social divisions between priests and the local community, especially as related to what aspects of historical knowledge is shared and not shared, as well as believed and not believed.³ In other words, local priests have not reciprocated the belief that is so central to his community’s Catholicism. Bernie Eaglechild distinguishes her historical consciousness of her community’s history with her mother’s “Catholic way” of making sense of the past. In explaining that she would tell it “the right way,” Bernie refers to a local story of 1885 where a Dene woman Setsūne K’aidzié,⁴ or Willow Heart, helped the Catholic nuns and priests who fled from the mission in

¹ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013. For a detailed introduction to Jacob Estralshenan see chapter one and Appendix A.

² Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014. For a detailed introduction to Bernie Eaglechild see Appendix A.

³ For a more detailed discussion see chapter one.

⁴ Elder Grandma Bébé Sarazine Ratt wrote out Willow Heart’s name for me in Dene as Setsūne K’aidzié. Because my own interviews were conducted in English or with translators, the English name Willow Heart was typically used to refer to her. The Dene spelling of her name varies in earlier publications. In the 2006 Meadow Lake Tribal Council’s collection of Elder’s stories, her name appears as Khiy-dzee-hey. In the 2006 *In Their Own Land* Tka-Taie is provided with Willow Heart in brackets. I was not able to find any references to Willow Heart in the oblate records, though it is possible that she is “la vieille Catherine” who is described as a Dene widow who assisted the priests, especially father Le Goff, and who welcomed him into her home 80 kilometers north east of the mission. Catherine taught Le Goff the Dene language, and assisted in the composition of collections of hymns and sermons in the Dene language, acts similar to those that community members attribute to Willow Heart. Elder Mary Lariviere provided Willow Heart’s name as Katrine in the 2006 *Voice of the Elders* collection. Timothy Foran, “Les

Ile-a-la-Crosse to Cross Island on the Churchill River in fear of Louis Riel. Bernie described her mother, an Elder and Jacob's contemporary, as a "die hard Catholic," whose views of the Catholic Church and its priests would never change regardless of the historical evidence. In contrast, Bernie's understanding of local histories and identities has been shaped by the evidence and interpretation provided her at university as well as her personal experiences at the Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS). Jacob, Bernie, and Bernie's mother have different understandings of Catholicism and Indigeneity in local historical consciousness as well as different ways of making sense of the past.

The chapters in this section consider memories of events associated with Willow Heart's life, notably local responses to the 1885 Riel Resistance and the 1906 Treaty and Scrip Commission, and how local historical consciousness around these events has shifted and varied within and between the communities of Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Willow Heart's story connects several events that scholars have tended to treat separately— Indigenous receptions of missionaries and conversions to Christianity, the events of 1885 and the Riel resistance, and the Treaty/Scrip Commission of 1906⁵— drawing attention to a significant shift in the relationship between local Indigenous peoples and the Catholic priests who were part of the order of Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) during this twenty year period. Between 1885 and 1906 the power of the oblates in northwestern Indigenous communities increased, at the expense of Dene women like Willow Heart. I suggest that this was due to the oblate's roles providing relief and aid to the destitute, their intermediary role between the people and the federal government, and the sustained and sincere Catholic faith of their parishioners. It also suggests shifting gender dynamics within local Indigenous communities. Willow Heart is remembered in Patuanak, but in Ile-a-la-Crosse she appears to have been forgotten, and even in Patuanak some stories of her are

Gens De Cette Place': Oblates And The Evolving Concept Of *Métis* At Ile-À-La-Crosse, 1845-1898," (PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2011), pp. 211, 226; "Mary Larivière," *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006) p. 125.

⁵ Scholarship on the region has tended to focus on the nineteenth century, with studies concluding around 1885 or the turn of the twentieth century. See for example, Foran, "Les Gens De Cette Place"; Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). There have been some studies of treaty ten that are separate from a broader regional history. See for example, Kenneth Coates and William Morrison, *Treaty Research Report: Treaty Ten, 1906* (Canada: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, 1986), pp. 18-19; Peter Dodson et al., *In Their Own Land: Treaty Ten and the Canoe Lake, Clear Lake, and English River Bands* (Saskatoon SK: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2006); Arthur Ray, Jim Miller and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Anthony G. Gulig, "In Whose Interest?: Government-Indian Relations in Northern Saskatchewan and Wisconsin, 1900-1940," PhD Dissertation (University of Saskatchewan, 1997).

not readily shared publicly with outsiders. Shifting, or perhaps competing, local memories help us to better understand how Indigenous views of the Catholic Church have changed over time and the need for scholars to understand the power of the Church in local politics during various historical moments.

The allocation of treaty and scrip in the northwest resulted in status differences that cut across cultural and kinship connections. This led some to identify as “treaty Indians,” and others to identify with the Metis Nation and leaders such as Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont who historically had ambiguous connections to the northwest. Willow Heart’s story and the related regional stories of 1885, and the Treaty and Scrip Commission of 1906, raise questions about how we understand Indigeneity in a local context and the complicated, entangled relationships between local stories, identities, and national narratives (such as those of the Metis Nation and current historiographical interpretations of 1885 and the numbered treaties in Canada). Stories of Willow Heart are absent from existing published histories of the region that have tended to focus on earlier time periods or the male dominated trapping economy, and do not factor into the scholarly understandings of Treaty Ten.⁶ This section is not simply about privileging a local story to challenge national narratives and imposed identities related to Indian status. Rather, a deep consideration of these stories allow us to untangle the ways that regional and national narratives have and continue to inform each other, in the process shaping communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, as well as how stories of the Metis Nation and pan-Indigeneity function at the local level to inform historical consciousness. Stories of Willow Heart, and the way they are told and not told, enable glimpses of the interplay between imposed identities, racialization, culture, kinship, gender, and self-identity. These are stories about creating divisions within and between communities as well as efforts to find connections beyond local communities through kinship and common histories that at times include Catholicism.

⁶ See also Robert Jarvenpa, “Inter-group Behaviour and Imagery: The Case of Chipewayen and Cree,” *Ethnology* 21, 4 (1982); Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, “Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier,” *Human Ecology* 13, 3 (1985). Jarvenpa’s scholarship has tended to focus on the male dominated trapping economy. He has also published about the Father Moraud pilgrimages in Patuanak. Jarvenpa’s field notes include some information about the treaty ten negotiations, but make no mention of Willow Heart. The Willow Heart story included in *In Their Own Lands* is not shaping the author’s analysis of treaty ten, which remains a fairly celebratory narrative. Peter Dodson et al., *In Their Own Land: Treaty Ten and the Canoe Lake, Clear Lake, and English River Bands* (Saskatoon SK: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2006).

This introductory section consists of a brief discussion of historiography and methods uniquely relevant to the following two chapters. Chapter two, examines the local historical consciousness surrounding Willow Heart – particularly her role as a prophet and in 1885, as well as shifting local interpretations of 1885 in the region relating to varying community identities. Chapter three focuses on events associated with the Treaty and Scrip Commission of 1906. More generally there is a shift from chapter two, where Willow Heart is a key interlocutor assisting newcomer priests to chapter three where Willow Heart is violently dismissed by the oblates. Willow Heart is the anchor that brings this section together, but themes of kinship, status difference, and varying interpretations of the relationships between Indigeneity and Catholicism cut across both chapters. My separation of Willow Heart narratives into chapters about the events of 1885 and 1906 fits more with western academic approaches to history than the recountings of Willow Heart stories shared by community members. By bringing these chapters together in a single section my goal is to indicate continuity in themes as well as local narratives.

Within the scholarship on northwestern communities as a whole and communities themselves there is a tension between the socially constructed racialized status differentials and the effects those differences have had on communities and identities over more than a century since the Treaty/Scrip Commission in 1906. According to anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa who worked in Patuanak during the 1970s federal categories of “treaty” and “non-treaty” (and all these terms signify) have increasingly contributed to Indigenous identities; often creating tensions within communities.⁷ Especially apparent in northwestern communities, where pre-treaty social, economic, and political boundaries between Cree, Dene, and Metis were variable and shifting, government definitions of race resulted in people having two contradictory identities: one based on legal status and the other on cultural affiliation.⁸ There is considerable ambiguity in government attempts to put racial policies into practice, and the process of who became treaty and non-treaty, included choice and cut across families, with individual members at times making independent decisions.⁹ Beyond this, the solidification of this boundary took decades to become apparent, and continued intermarriage, the sexist provisions of the Indian Act

⁷ Robert Jarvenpa, “Inter-group Behaviour and Imagery,” p. 297.

⁸ J.R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2004), p. 25; James B. Waldram, “‘The Other Side’: Ethnostatus Distinction in Western Subarctic Native Communities,” in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*, ed. by F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), pp. 285-8.

⁹ Brenda Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 2005), p. 289-299.

regarding Indian status, and individuals regaining status through Bill C-31 and Bill C-3, has reinforced and challenged the imposition of differences. Kinship ties continue to cross cultural and status differences in the northwest, and a study is still needed that takes a comprehensive regional perspective. My comparative study has revealed that varying status and more recently “community” identities grounded in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak (which did not become major population centers until the 1970s) affect how individuals reinterpret local and regional history. Few today would see scrip as central to a Metis identity, but it is often used as evidence of Metis ancestry, and subsequent divisions in terms of legal status combined with gendered provisions in the Indian Act to cut across kinship connections in the region. By bridging scholarly discussions of 1885 and the numbered treaties, these chapters complicate understandings of Metis and First Nations identities along status lines.¹⁰

Dene, Cree and Metis women have in the past and present been the ones most likely to cross the boundaries of culture and status. A comparative approach allows for more attention to these women, and to connections and similarities between communities that have been legally and culturally coded as separate. Simply critiquing imposed status differences by the federal government, or the national narrative of the Metis Nation, such as that offered by sociologist and Metis studies scholar Chris Andersen and the Métis National Council (MNC), would dismiss local historical consciousness that at times incorporates imposed identities and embraces aspects of national narratives that historically are quite distant from northwestern Saskatchewan. The benefit of considering Ile-a-la-Crosse and English River, treaty status and non-status, as well as local and national narratives, is to tease out the ambiguity of divisions and connections within and between communities.

Willow Heart stories recorded between 2006 and 2013 and the records of the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission draw attention to the significant role of the Catholic Church and its priests in both the political and spiritual affairs of the region. Scholarship on Catholicism in the region has focused on either the mission and missionaries, or the conversion of local Indigenous

¹⁰ Historian J. R. Miller and Sociologist and Metis Studies Scholar Chris Andersen have both called for studies that cross status lines. Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), pp.18, 204-207; J. R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” in *Reflections of Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 551-52. Camilla Augustus’ dissertation considers the ambiguity of government policies towards the Metis. See Camilla Augustus, “Mixed Race, Legal Space: Official Discourse, Indigeneity, and Racial Mixing in Canada, the US, and Australia, 1850-1950,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 2013).

people and debating the sincerity of those conversions.¹¹ Stories of Willow Heart raise questions about gender and the role of Indigenous women in the early years of the Catholic Church in the region, and depict a strong Indigenous woman helping and guiding newcomer priests.

In addition to my own interviews and observations, the following chapters draw on earlier oral and community sources such as anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa's field notes, interviews available at Saskatchewan Archives and through the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), testimony before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1992, interviews published in the Office of the Treaty Commissioner's (OTC) book *In their Own Land*, and a variety of published local history collections, such as the Ile-a-la-Crosse bi-centennial history book and a collection of Elders stories published by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC).¹² My reasoning for consulting additional oral and community sources was due to gaps in my own interviews around events taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Several Elders in Patuanak were willing and able to share stories of Willow Heart. Discussions of the signing of Treaty Ten were more general or had been recorded earlier in greater detail. In Ile-a-la-Crosse especially, I observed that while individuals were aware of the significance of 1885 and 1906 in their communities, few commented on the record in significant detail about these events. In effect, I had the recognition of these as significant moments in the region's history, and glimpses of local historical consciousness or understandings of the impact of these events on their communities. I also observed differences within and between communities in terms of how the events of 1885 and 1906 were remembered and discussed. Subsequently, I have relied more heavily on other sources, though used my own observations and interviews to help with my interpretation. I have also drawn on archival evidence from the Department of Indian Affairs, in particular correspondence relating to the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission in an effort to further contextualize and situate the power of the Church at that time, and the ambiguity apparent in government efforts to classify the people of the region and assign varying legal statuses.

¹¹ See for example, Barbara Benoit, "Mission at Île-à-la-Crosse," *The Beaver*, (1980) pp. 40- 50; Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (University of Alberta Press: Edmonton, 1996); Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995; Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, second edition 2007, first edition 1993).

¹² Robert Longpre, "Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1776-1976 : Sakitawak Bi-centennial," (Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan: Ile-a-la-Crosse Bi-Centennial Committee, Ile-a-la-Crosse Local Community Authority, 1977); *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006).

Elders in Patuanak like Jacob Estralshenan and Grandma B    Sarazine Ratt carry and are willing to share stories of Willow Heart. Sitting around kitchen tables, occasionally with the help of local translators, I recorded some of these stories. Other stories were shared more informally when individuals learned that I was interested in the history of the community. Willow Heart is always depicted as a grandmother, and her power of prediction is compared to that of either a biblical prophet or Nostradamus.¹³ She paddled out to help the priests when they first arrived in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and in other retellings canoed around Big Island singing hymns in Dene. It was Willow Heart who taught the priests the Dene language, authored Catholic hymns, and wrote them down in syllabics.¹⁴ The chronology of the stories is unclear, and I was not told if Willow Heart made predictions throughout her life or just near the end, though several accounts indicate that she shared her predictions with the priests and nuns who later lost the records.¹⁵ What is clear is that some of her predictions are believed to have come true and are used to advocate for different sides of current debates within the community. Willow Heart is remembered as having predicted airplanes, roads, and drastic negative changes to the environment. She warned that young people would lose their traditions in schools. When it came to the priests whom she helped, people explain that she knew that there would come a time when they would no longer be recognizable as priests – they would cease to wear robes and would dress like ordinary people. Their power would be diminished.¹⁶ Her prediction of the decline of Catholicism in the region is understood by local people as accurate, but also as a call for the faithful to make sure that they and their families remembered and practiced their prayers and rosary so they could maintain their faith in the absence of priests.¹⁷

I have not found references to Willow Heart in the field notes of Robert Jarvenpa during his fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s, though she is mentioned in interviews conducted in 2006

¹³ Willow Heart was neither the first nor the last individual from English River to predict the future. Former Chief Ralph Paul notes other prophets in the region during the 1800s, as well as the first chief's wife, Mary Apesis, who offered predictions in the 1940s. See for example Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul in 2014. Historian Kerry Abel provides a scholarly account of Dene prophets in her consideration of Dene conversion and Catholicism. Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs*.

¹⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013; Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D'Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid; See also *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006).

¹⁶ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013; Sarazine Ratt, 25 June 2013; Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

¹⁷ See for example, "Philip Wolverine," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 169; "Mary Estosinaire," *Voice of the Elders*, pp. 116, 118.

for both the MLTC and the OTC books.¹⁸ Stories of Willow Heart in the 2006 collections include oral footnotes to grandparents and Elders who shared the stories of Setsūne K'aidzié. This suggests that the absence of Willow Heart in the earlier field notes was a result of differing research questions and Jarvenpa's emphasis on the "traditional," male, trapping economy. It is also possible that as more of Willow Heart's predictions become apparent to the community, that aspect of her story has been more widely shared. Local conflicts over resource development, and the English River First Nation's decision in 2013 to sign agreements with mining companies Cameco and Areva, have led community members both for and against development to reference Willow Heart's predictions, and interpret them to fit with their views on the benefits and consequences of development.

¹⁸ Robert Jarvenpa, "Field notes collected in northwestern Saskatchewan from 4 June to 29 July 1975," (1975) VI-D-15M, Canadian Museum of History Archives; Robert Jarvenpa, "Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory" (1979) VI-D-38M R, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

Chapter 2

This chapter explores shifting local historical consciousness around Willow Heart to consider the various ways that people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse negotiate Indigeneity and Catholicism. Willow Heart's work as an interlocutor to early oblates as well as the interpretation of her prophecies by some Elders draw attention to the prominence of Catholicism historically within northwestern Saskatchewan and positions Patuanak as an historically Catholic community. Because of either experiences at residential schools, education at university, or general observations of the authoritarian power of the Church in their community, some individuals are critical of what they see as the "hardcore" Catholic faith of earlier generations. In this way, there is a shift from a community where everyone was Catholic by nature of their baptism as infants and participation in the Church to a community with a Catholic history where some have personally chosen to reject Catholicism. Class, gender, age, and personal experiences factor into the stories people choose to tell about their faith and the Church, and their understandings of how being Catholic and Indigenous either fits or does not fit within their personal stories and interpretations of their community's history. In this regard, there are multiple ways that people in Patuanak have understood what it means to be Dene and Indigenous, though increasingly for younger people there is a trend towards separating Catholicism from Indigeneity. Some of the Elders I have spoken with and historical figures like Willow Heart trouble the notion of an uncritical generation of Elders who equated faith with obedience. Local historical consciousness of Willow Heart and 1885 is further complicated along the lines of Indian Status and the efforts of some in Ile-a-la-Crosse to connect to narratives of the Metis Nation. This chapter begins by considering stories of Willow Heart as a prophet and her role in 1885 as an entrée to discuss how Catholicism and Indigeneity are negotiated in local historical consciousness. I then turn from focusing on Patuanak to Ile-a-la-Crosse, and how stories of 1885 within local historical consciousness are negotiated amidst efforts to connect to the Metis Nation.

Jacob Estralshenan, born at Dipper Lake and raised by his maternal (Cree) grandparents, explained that he used to listen to his grandparents telling stories, and they used to talk about Willow Heart. Jacob was 87 when I interviewed him in 2013.¹ When I asked Jacob about when

¹ For a more detailed introduction to Jacob and description of my work with him see chapter one and Appendix A.

people in the area became Catholic he answered by talking about Willow Heart—not the first priests. He explained:

There was an old lady long time ago, name was Willow – I don’t know what. That old lady knew what was gonna happen in the future, she knew ahead what was going to happen. That’s what is coming up—everything she said is starting. Just like the priest, when they first came they started teaching people to be Catholic. She said, ‘you priests come up here, where they used to have a gown like the black robes and the cross. Later on you guys going to take that off. Take the cross off and a person doesn’t know you, they won’t know if you’re a priest or not.’ That’s what happened. Priests dress like us now, old lady knew what was going to happen. Finally said, ‘going to leave here be no more priests.’ What’s happening now, all over.²

Willow Heart is the powerful figure and authority in Jacob’s recountings; she was both the reason for Catholicism’s success in the region and predicted the shifting role of the Catholic Church and priests in the northwest.³

In Jacob’s recounting, Willow Heart was responsible for authoring the Dene gospel songs that remain popular today, and that he sings in church. Willow Heart was not simply a translator or language instructor, but an author, teacher, and to an extent a spiritual leader. Jacob explained, “we got songs in Dene, gospel songs, she made that up. At Ile-a-la-Crosse there’s that Big Island. She used to paddle around there, and used to sing those songs. I don’t know how she knew, she knew how to write Dene so she made the books. That old lady, Willow...just like this bridge here.”⁴ Other Elders I spoke with shared stories of Willow Heart in response to questions about the beginnings of Catholicism in the region. Although she has since passed away, when I met and interviewed her in 2013 Patuanak’s oldest resident, Grandma Bébé Sarazine Ratt spoke five languages, and had previously taught Dene syllabics at the school. When I interviewed her in 2013 with the help of Patrick D’jonaire she was over 100 years old, and still living at home.

² Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013.

³ Several Elders in the 2006 Meadow Lake Tribal Council collection of Elder’s stories emphasized Willow Heart’s ability to predict the future. For example, Delia Black, shared this story that she heard from her grandmother about the old lady that lived across the lake: “She knew so much and she was telling the nuns and the priests what was going to happen in the future. You will be the first one to take your habits off and your crosses around your neck. There will be no more priests and it is going to be gone and she said the same thing to the nuns. Now you don’t see the nuns dressed in their black habits or the priests in their black dresses. All that has changed. That’s what the old lady had predicted.” Like Jacob, Delia emphasizes changes in attire, as well as the shifting presence of the priests and nuns in the region “Delia Black” *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p. 101. See also: Jonas Aubichon, *Voice of the Elders*, p. 97; “Rose Campbell,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 107, “Mary Estrosinaire,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 118; “Mary Larivière,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 125; “Mary Maurice,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 132; “Louis Paul,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 143; “Philip Wolverine,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 169.

⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

She enthusiastically showed me her hymnals in Dene syllabics that she explained were the books that Willow Heart wrote.⁵ In crediting the authorship of the songs to Willow Heart rather than the priests, Grandma Ratt provides a local historical narrative where the history of Catholicism in the region includes local Indigenous power and agency. It is not simply conversion as a result of missionary efforts.⁶

Although today, Willow Heart stories are more closely associated with the Dene community of Patuanak, Jacob explained that he learned many of his stories from his Cree grandfather.⁷ Many of the places named in the Willow Heart stories (such as Big Island) are close to Ile-a-la-Crosse and the mission that was established there in 1846. Jacob's emphasis on his grandparents and other Elders sharing stories of Willow Heart suggest her long-term significance within local historical consciousness. He explained, "I used to sit, he [Jacob's grandfather] used to tell us stories. A long time ago, the Elders used to sit around, tell stories and we used to listen and sit. And listen to them telling stories. And they used to talk about this."⁸ Elders from other Dene and Cree communities in the region do not include stories of Willow Heart in their accounts as published in *Voice of the Elders*. Some community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse with kinship connections to English River heard stories of Willow Heart, though this was dependent on the strength of those connections and was at times limited by things such as attendance at residential school. Several of the Elders from English River who share stories of Willow Heart, like Jacob, note that they heard them from their grandparents. Mary Lariviere, who I met with a couple of times during my visits to Patuanak,⁹ shared stories of Willow Heart in the 2006 collection. She concluded her stories that she herself learned from her mother; by

⁵ Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D'Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013. For a more detailed introduction to Grandma Ratt see chapter one and Appendix A.

⁶ Stories of Willow Heart provide a regional example demonstrating the agency of Indigenous interlocutors with early missionaries. Willow Heart's negotiation of Catholicism fits with the findings of scholars like Kerry Abel as well as others such as Susan Neylan and Tolly Bradford who have considered early interactions between Indigenous people and missionaries in other geographic contexts. My focus on continuing historical consciousness about Willow Heart moves the conversation beyond debates over Indigenous conversion to consider the continued negotiation of Catholicism within Indigenous communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See: Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, second edition 2007, first edition 1993); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012).

⁷ Jacob's grandparents were Norbert and Sarah Bell. "Jacob Estrosinaire," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 113.

⁸ Jacob Estralsheenan, 21 August 2013.

⁹ I interviewed Mary Lariviere three times formally, but also met with her at English River First Nation events, such as the family camp in 2013. Our conversations tended to focus on Father Moraud and Mary's own faith. For a more detailed introduction to Mary and my work with her see Appendix A.

explaining, “The young people are not interested in these legends.”¹⁰ From Mary’s perspective, there is a shift in local historical consciousness as younger people are not interested in stories about Willow Heart. One of the purposes of the 2006 Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) collection was to create a space for Elders to share their histories and teachings with their grandchildren. Numerous references to Willow Heart by English River Elders within the collection suggest that they want future generations to incorporate stories of her into their historical consciousness.

Bernie Eaglechild grew up at Primeau Lake and her family moved to Patuanak when she was five so her dad could work at the coop store. She was sent to Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) when she was six years old. In 2013, she was a Band Councilor for English River, so we met in the Band Office for our one interview. She heard stories about Willow Heart and Cross Island when she was growing up from her grandmother and her mother, Christine George. Bernie shared the following story of Willow Heart helping the nuns and priests who fled from Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1885 fearing an attack by Louis Riel. She emphasized that it was better told in Dene:

So basically Willow Heart took care of the nuns and the priests who took refuge at Cross Island. They had to live in tents and the nuns and priests were not used to live like that. My mother said ‘she’d make spruce boughs every day. But the nuns in their anxiety, always looking down the river. They were nervous, so every day she was changing spruce bough’s because the nuns would walk over them...’ Willow Heart, the bridge is named after Willow Heart. She sort of took care of the nuns there I think. And because they weren’t used to living in tents and they were very anxious looking down the river to see if they were going to be slaughtered any minute [laughter].¹¹

The story as shared by Bernie emphasizes the knowledge, power, and strength of Willow Heart (especially in contrast to the anxious nuns) as well as Willow Heart’s work and labour to take care of the priests and nuns. This is a story of the clergy being dependent on a Dene woman. It contrasts the differing lifestyles of the nuns and priests at the mission with those of local Indigenous people, emphasizing a separation between these groups. Bernie repeats in the story that “they were not used to live like that,” and that “they weren’t used to living in tents.” While the nuns and priests are dependent, and Willow Heart is working to help them, there is also a

¹⁰ “Mary Lariviere,” *Voice of the Elders*, pp. 125-6.

¹¹ Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014. For more information about Bernie and our work together see Appendix A.

clear difference and distance between them in this story. This story was not shared as a suspenseful story of refugees escaping slaughter, but rather with considerable humour and even laughter at what, with the hindsight of more than a century of colonialism, was the unjustified anxiety of the nuns. The nuns' fear and anxiety is dealt with by Willow Heart with patience, and seen as ridiculous to present-day storytellers. In addition to the distance between Willow Heart and those she sought to help, there is perhaps an even greater distance between Willow Heart and a modern Dene woman like Bernie Eaglechild.

As our conversation continued, Bernie explained that her experiences at BIRS and her education at university caused her to interpret the story of Willow Heart helping the priests and nuns differently than her mother. Willow Heart is a significant story to both women, but there has been a generational shift in how she fits into their individual historical consciousness. Bernie explained how her understanding had changed from what her mom told her:

Mostly about how the nuns from Ile-a-la-Crosse heard that Louis Riel, that the Riel Rebellion or Resistance or whatever you call it now, Resistance. They took refuge there I guess the nuns, because they heard that Riel was somewhere there in the vicinity of Green Lake, and so back then I guess they had this view that Riel was a bad man...So then in our, Big Bear is an Aboriginal hero to modern, but back then Big Bear sort of sided with Louis Riel, so to the Catholics Big Bear was a bad man too there. It's kind of interesting you know Catholic religion versus how they say who's bad, or good, or whatever. So after you go to school, you learn about that. You get turned off the way the Catholics made you to believe.¹²

In Bernie's historical consciousness, Catholicism and Indigeneity are increasingly at odds; there is a binary between the Catholic and Indigenous views. Knowledge from university combined with personal experience is evidence that challenges her mother's interpretation of the past. The notion that the story as shared by her mother and others is the "way the Catholics made you believe," suggests the perceived power of the Catholic Church within communities not only in regards to faith, but also what stories and histories community members come to believe. Unlike Jacob, who identifies Catholic belief as something with deep historical roots in his community, Bernie sees it as an outside imposition forced on her community. Her interpretation undermines Willow Heart's agency with an understanding that emphasizes the colonial nature of the Church. Critiquing the colonial role of the Church leads to reinterpreting other local stories and beliefs, and vice versa. Bernie's shifting historical consciousness shows generational differences within

¹² Ibid.

the community, and indicates the profound impact that attending BIRS has had on how younger community members view the Church and related local histories.¹³

Christine George was 82 at the time of my conversation with her daughter, who described her as a “die hard Catholic” who was unable, or unwilling to accept the stories of physical and sexual abuse that occurred at the residential schools.¹⁴ In contrast Bernie explained, “what turned me off the Church, the pedophiles. Those of us go to residential school, I was there nine years...”¹⁵ The relationship between residential school experience and a more critical view or rejection of the Church was apparent in other interviews, as was the generation gap between Elders who are seen to uncritically support and believe in the Church (like Bernie’s mom), and their children who were abused at BIRS.¹⁶ BIRS opened in La Plonge in 1906, was transferred to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in 1983, and closed in 1995.¹⁷ Members of Bernie’s mothers’ generation attended the school, though I do not know if Christine George attended.¹⁸ Bernie illustrated her mom’s “die hard” Catholic beliefs with examples from the trial of Paul Leroux in North Battleford where many men from Patuanak testified about being abused by the supervisor at Beauval IRS, and references to former Bishop Dumouchel sexually assaulting girls in Patuanak.¹⁹ She explained, “In my moms eyes the bishop, priests are holier than thou, and they should not be talked about or against.”²⁰ This is a sentiment that I have heard elsewhere from older generations of community members, and has been attributed by younger people I spoke

¹³ Ibid. See also, Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D’Jonaire, 25 June 2013; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

¹⁴ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. See also, Sarazine Ratt, 25 June 2013; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes. There is also evidence of this in some of the Elder recountings published in *Voice of the Elders*. Because this collection was published in 2006, it is possible that some of the attitudes reflected regarding residential schools are particular to that time period, and could have changed since. However, some of the statements directly refer to not accepting accounts of abuse in the residential schools, reflecting a refusal of some Elders to believe stories of abuse that I also found in some of my own interviews, personal conversations (from the perspective of the Elders and those who attended the schools who felt parents and grandparents would not believe them), and statements made in Ile –a-la-Crosse before Minister Bennett on September 8th 2016.

¹⁷ For a more detailed timeline of BIRS see chapter one.

¹⁸ Other Elders of Bernie’s mother’s generation such as Mary Lariviere and Jacob Estralshenan attended the school in Beauval.

¹⁹ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014. I heard stories of Archbishop Dumouchel sexually abusing girls in the community from other community members, though Bernie was the only person to bring this up in an interview setting. A point of concern for some was that abuse by the bishop in the community was not included in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

²⁰ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

with to parents and grandparents who have passed away. Bernie continued to describe her conversation about the Leroux trial with her mom:

That trial stressed me out, that guy denying these things. Seventeen testimonies against him. How could he? Got myself worked up. Opened the subject with my mom, ‘why do you defend the priest?’ ... I finally realized you don’t argue with an old woman. You aren’t going to change her views, her Catholic views. She was defending him, the bishop. You defend what he did to those girls. Die hard Catholic. That’s why I call them the die hard Catholics because they will die with their views...²¹

Bernie’s interpretation of her mother’s faith illustrates a significant generational difference in how priests and bishops are perceived that directly ties to the experiences of some community members at residential schools. It also highlights the spiritual and political power of the Church to those who believe that priests and bishops cannot do wrong because of their perceived proximity to God and their role in the racialized hierarchy of Canadian settler colonialism.

To understand the power of the Catholic Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, one needs to recognize the Catholic faith of some individuals. An understanding of that faith, which for individuals like Bernie’s mom has been practiced for generations, combined with the role of the Church in communities in the early and mid-twentieth century as providers of relief and as intermediaries with government is necessary to appreciate the power of the Church.²² Recognizing this deeper context of Catholicism enables an understanding of the depth of harm that was done in residential schools and by members of the clergy who used their positions of power to abuse children and others. The more benevolent components of the Church’s colonialism in the northwest combined with the legitimate and sincere Catholic faith has made it difficult for some Catholic Elders to accept the violence committed by Church officials in their community. These generational divisions and the effect they have had on families have not been addressed in the majority of previous scholarship.²³ Simply dismissing the Catholic perspectives

²¹ Ibid.

²² The HBC also provided relief in the region. However, the focus of this chapter and the following is on the significance of the Church as a relief provider, since this aspect of the Church and the Church’s involvement in the negotiation of Treaty Ten has received less scholarly attention.

²³ For example, this issue has not been included in the published reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), or the growing body of scholarship regarding Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in Canada. I suggest that this gap is due to the tendency to separate academic discussions of IRS from broader histories of Catholic, or other Christian faiths within Indigenous communities. Works like J. R. Miller’s have paid considerable attention to the role of the Christian Churches in Canadian residential schools and included religious perspectives. More recently he has considered the reconciliation process. But generally, scholarship on residential schools and Indigenous Christianity remains separate. For example, in the recent collection *Mixed Blessings*: only one article focused on Christianity and the Canadian TRC, and from the perspective of religious studies and theology, rather

of Elders, or the lengthy history of Catholicism and Catholic traditions within the region in efforts to decolonize, would not facilitate understanding this complicated history and the experiences of women like Christine George and Willow Heart.

Bernie was critical of her mother's "die hard Catholic" approach, but her own relationship with the Church and with stories like that of Willow Heart helping the nuns and priests was also ambiguous. She did not simply reject the Catholic elements of the story in her retelling. Furthermore, our conversation revealed how the Church remained a part of her family life. She explained, "I brought my kids up in the Catholic faith, but told them they could decide. Other than that I have an Aboriginal worldview, guiding principals."²⁴ Both stories and knowledge from her grandmother and mother, as well as critical perspectives and definitions of Indigeneity learned at University and from broader reading, seems to have informed her sense of an Indigenous worldview.

I asked Bernie if going to university affected the way she interpreted local stories. She responded:

Oh yeah, I went to Native Studies in university, got my degree in education. So, and it's interesting because there were stories at the university that my grandmother used to tell me, like that Slavey woman Thanadelthur. She was sort of the Dene woman going between back then during the fur trade....And the Crees and the Dene were always, and historically they always fought.... My mother tells it so much better, when you translate it, it sort of gets lost. ...The story was at the university and that really interested me because my grandmother used to tell me, along with stories of Riel.²⁵

than a study of Indigenous perspectives. The bulk of recent scholarship considering Indigenous Christianity focuses on earlier time periods or life histories of individuals. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939 to 2000: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 1* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queens University Press, 2015); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 3* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); J.R. Miller, "Dealing with Residential School Survivors: Reconciliation in International Perspective," *Australasian Canadian Studies*, 26, no. 1 (2008); J.R. Miller, "We Are Sorry" The Canadian Government Apology for Residential Schooling," *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society*, 46, no. 2 (spring 2009); Sipiwe Dube, "Aporia, Atrocity, and Religion in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, edited by Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), pp. 145-163;

²⁴ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

²⁵ Ibid; Ovide Wolverine also shared a version of the Thanadelthur story with me noting that Willow Heart stories were not the only stories he heard from Elders and that there were also stories of the Cree and Dene fighting. For an introduction to Ovide Wolverine see Appendix A. Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014.

The story of Thanadelthur shows the continuous role of Dene women within Dene history in crossing cultural boundaries, and challenges the notion of a single Indigenous worldview in demonstrating historical conflict between the Cree and Dene. Stories of Willow Heart and Thanadelthur suggest that Dene women were interlocutors who formed connections between their communities and others. This draws attention to the relationship between local stories and stories that are more established within Canadian history, suggesting that a familiarity with stories in a familial and local sense made them more significant when they were encountered in university.

Some components from her university education, such as Big Bear's role as a hero and critiquing the idea that Riel was a threat, have shaped Bernie's personal interpretation of local history, but she also found value in her grandmother and mother's telling of the stories in Dene. Here a broader "Aboriginal world view" still relates to local specificities and experiences. In this way, Willow Heart remains a significant figure to Bernie. When I asked her if she would tell her children and grandchildren the story of Willow Heart she responded, "Yeah, because Willow Heart is significant. I would tell her my version, the true version. My mom tends to tell it in the Catholic way. I'd tell it my way, the right way."²⁶ Willow Heart is seen as an important figure in local Dene history but her role in helping the priests, and the associated Catholicism, is increasingly separate from Bernie's personal understanding of what it means to be Indigenous. Locally telling stories of Willow Heart will likely continue, though the focus of the stories, or local historical consciousness, is shifting.

Drawing on the scholarship of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Taiake Alfred, Glen Coulthard, Audra Simpson, and Chantal Fiola, I could frame the work I have done as narratives of colonization and decolonization- wherein Bernie's mother and others have internalized colonialism, and conversely, Bernie is moving towards decolonization.²⁷ I argue that this history is more complex. To situate academic history in a dialogue with local historical consciousness, and to respect the multifaceted expression that power inevitably assumes, we must first acknowledge the role of the Church in the colonizing and decolonizing processes, as well as how

²⁶ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

²⁷ Taiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999); Chantal Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

people can see themselves as part of an Indigenous community and members of a Roman Catholic community. We can then examine how this changes over time, and varies within communities. How Willow Heart saw herself as a Dene Catholic woman undoubtedly changed over the course of her lifetime, and differed from how Christine George and now Bernie Eaglechild understand themselves and negotiate their Catholicism and Dene Indigeneity. There can and should be a range in local stories of Catholicism that may include personal faith but could also focus on memories of the traditions and beliefs of parents and grandparents, or a rejection of that faith for a variety of reasons. This is within the context of a shifting Canadian narrative after Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology and with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that has created more space to publicly share stories of abuse, or to speak against the Church (that is now less powerful in the northwest). It also relates to varying understandings of Indigeneity visible within English River, in Bernie's recountings and in those of Elders who have observed declining church attendance and Catholicism in their communities.

Similar to Bernie's efforts to tell the Willow Heart story "the right way," with little reference to the Catholic influences she identifies in her mother's version, former chief of English River, Ralph Paul's recounting does not focus on Willow Heart's role as an interlocutor or the Catholic aspects of her story. I met with Chief Paul in Winnipeg in 2014, where he shared a copy of his unpublished autobiography focusing on his time at BIRS.²⁸ In the manuscript he introduces himself explaining, "my parents told me that I was born in the wintertime on the west side of Haultain Lake. My parents, being good practicing Catholics, made a trip to Patuanak by dog team to have me baptized as Raphael Victor Paul."²⁹ More generally throughout the manuscript Chief Paul is critical of the Catholic Church and their efforts to indoctrinate children at BIRS. He wrestles his own experiences and decision to stop practicing Catholicism in 1968 with the significance of Catholicism to his own family and community. Chief Paul explains that his grandfather, James Yowatsageh, "was also very religious and a person that prayed a bit. He assisted the local missionary named Father Louis Moraud in teaching the Catholic doctrine and teachings. So, I can see why my dad was so religious."³⁰ Chief Paul goes on to question how his father was able to reconcile Catholicism with his Dene spirituality. At other points in the

²⁸ For a more detailed introduction to Chief Ralph Paul and my work with him see Appendix A.

²⁹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, Introduction.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

manuscript, elements of Catholicism are seen to fit within Dene systems, suggesting that Chief Paul's relationship with Catholicism is more ambiguous. For example Chief Paul notes the historical significance of godparents as integral to the Dene clan system, and takes care to explain that his godparents were Joe Kyplain, a Metis person and his wife Marion who was Chief Paul's mother's first cousin.³¹

Chief Paul only briefly mentions Willow Heart as an example of *E Konzee*, which he defines as a Dene spiritual art, and as someone who echoed the earlier prophecy of "revered medicine man" Sas Keh (Bear Foot or Bear Paw). He recounts the story he heard from his grandmother Virginia and read about in the memoirs of Bishop Vital Grandin, where Grandin seeks out Sas Keh at Patuanak sometime during the 1840s for practicing *E Konzee*, which Grandin interprets as devil worship. Sas Keh is waiting for Grandin when he arrives, and is not afraid of Grandin's cross prophesizing, "you will be amongst us for a while, but soon you will be gone."³² Chief Paul then shares Willow Heart's prophecy as that of a second *E Konzee* echoing Bear Foot explaining, "recently, I interviewed an Elder, age 93, in my home Reserve. She mentioned another lady by the name of Khiy Dzee Yeh (Willow Heart) that she also mentions that these missionaries would only be in our midst for a short time only. This is now taking place."³³

In Chief Paul's recounting Willow Heart is not an interlocutor assisting the priests to learn the Dene language or someone who helps them in 1885, rather she fits within a longer line of Dene prophets who were separate from the missionaries, did not fear them, and correctly predicted that the influence of the missionaries would be short lived. Chief Paul begins and concludes his memoir with a reference to these predictions, with his time at BIRS fitting into the predicted short time frame in which the missionaries had influence, and the present day the time that Sas Keh and Willow Heart foretold. However, Chief Paul identifies this present time as essentially a spiritual vacuum where "The influence of these early missionaries is gone, and there is no belief system to replace it."³⁴ Like Bernie, Chief Paul does not see the Catholicism of his

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. Although she does not mention Willow Heart, Kerry Abel includes discussions of Dene prophets in as examples of revitalization movements. She further explores how missionaries understood Indigenous prophets and emphasizes prophet movements did not last long. In contrast, Ralph Paul situates Sas Keh within a longer line of Dene Medicine Men that includes Willow Heart. I do not consider Willow Heart within the lens of revitalization movements, but rather as a Dene prophet and interlocutor. Abel, *Drum Songs*, pp.128-131.

³³ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 9.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 144.

parents or grandparents fitting within his understanding of the Dene belief system, and he struggles to make sense of how his father was able to negotiate the two. But rather than simply a matter of Catholic or Indigenous interpretation that can be alternated as in Bernie's recounting, Chief Paul's narrative includes the loss of Dene and Catholic belief systems, raising questions about what becomes of historically Catholic Indigenous communities with the decline of Catholicism.

To some community members in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse the decline in church attendance in their communities is viewed with sadness or renewed efforts to connect with the Church. Recently the English River Dene Nation completed building a new Catholic church in the community that is larger than the original church built by Father Moraud in the 1930s. I have heard stories from Elders in Patuanak where they describe sadness that their community does not have a permanent priest. Jacob Estralshenan continued to self-identify as Catholic but recognized a decline in the Catholic faith in his community. He explained:

People down this way, everybody was a Catholic – Knee Lake, Dipper, Patuanak, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo – they're all Catholics. Now these days down there too, they've slackened down. All like people don't go to church anymore, not very many. After the Elders are gone there will be nothing, I think there will be no church, the Catholics will be gone.³⁵

I asked Jacob how he felt about the disappearance of Catholicism and the Church to which he responded, "well, I feel bad about it. Because it was our lives, that was what we believed. Maybe its right or maybe its wrong, I don't know, nobody knows, nobody's seen it."³⁶ I interpret Jacob's response as highlighting the significance of both his faith as well as eighty-seven years of belonging to the Catholic Church and being part of a Catholic community. Although Jacob understands why younger generations are moving away from the Church and throughout our interview was willing to critique the institution, his Catholic beliefs remain significant. Even if Catholicism is understood as a temporary belief-system within the region that is now changing, as in Chief Paul's interpretation of Willow Heart's prophecy, for over 170 years it has been meaningful to community members like Jacob. In this way life history, in Jacob's case as a practicing Catholic, as well as class, gender, and age inform how community members negotiate and understand the relationship between Catholicism and Indigeneity.

³⁵ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

³⁶ Ibid.

The declining role of the Church was one of Willow Heart's predictions that several Elders have noted – both in my own conversations and in recorded stories for the MLTC's collection of Elder stories in 2006. Some like Jacob, see “slackening down” as evidence of truth in her prediction, but others whose stories were shared in the 2006 collection seemed to interpret this aspect of Willow Heart's prophecies as reiterating the need for younger generations to learn how to pray in a non-denominational, though decidedly Christian, way. For example, Jacob's wife Mary Estralshenan explained,

There was an old lady named khiy-dzee-hey and she knew everything before it happened. Sometimes I think about what my grandpa told us and they were right. I think it was next to God. My granddaughter, when you grow older you will teach the young people how to pray... Nowadays people don't know where they are because they don't pray. You have to do a lot of praying. My grandpa used to tell us. There will be no priests, no nuns, no brothers. We will have to bury our people. We have to have respect for the Elders. Don't talk back. God loves us very much. Have respect for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Have respect for the priests.³⁷

In my reading, Mary makes a connection between stories of Willow Heart's predictions she learned from her grandfather, her observation that these predictions have come true, and that they came from God. In this context, her grandfather's call to teach young people to pray, and the need for young people to learn how to pray and have respect relates to Willow Heart's prophecy of a declining priesthood in the region. I did not have the opportunity to interview Mary, because she was most comfortable speaking in Dene and I could only conduct interviews in English.³⁸ During my meetings with Jacob we sat at the kitchen table while Mary washed dishes and went about her day – she did not participate in our conversations.

A similar interpretation to Mary Estralshenan's can be seen in Philip Wolverine's stories shared in the 2006 *Voice of the Elders* book. He does not explicitly mention Willow Heart, but refers to a woman who sang and predicted what would happen in the future, as something he learned from the Elders before him. Philip explained:

When I was small our parents used to force us to go to church. Always go to church they told us. In the future there will be no more priests. We were told every morning to say “Our Father.” Our Lord had made that prayer for all the people in the world and for a person to make the sign of the cross and to pray.³⁹

³⁷ “Mary Estrosinaire,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 118.

³⁸ I was directed to speak with Mary's husband Jacob because of his knowledge and his ability to share stories in English.

³⁹ “Philip Wolverine,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 169.

In this context, I interpret his explanation of his parents forcing him to go to church and learn the Lord's Prayer as a response to predictions, like Willow Heart's, that the priests and nuns would not always be in the region. Especially when taken with Mary Estralshenan's story, there is a sense that Elders' calls for younger generations to learn how to pray (and even the efforts their own parents and grandparents made to teach them how to pray) can be interpreted as a response to the prophecy of a future without priests. These interpretations of the Willow Heart story differ from Jacob's discussion of slackening down, which he seems to accept, Chief Paul's interpretation of Catholicism as a brief phase, and Bernie's efforts to separate some of the Catholic elements from the stories.

In contrast to the depiction of Elders as "die hard" Catholics by younger community members, some of the Elders I spoke with demonstrated nuanced understandings of the Catholic Church, recognizing some of its failings in the northwest while maintaining their faith. In this way, more complicated or ambiguous relationships with the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith are not limited to those who attended the Beauval IRS in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. For example, to Jacob, a potential reason for the movement away from the Church is that the priests refused to believe local stories. He explained,

If you tell a story to a priest, they won't believe it heh, and then when they talk to us they say, 'you didn't see it but you have to believe.' But them, they don't believe what we tell them. So I don't know, that's another thing, sometimes I think about it. Just like the olden days, they had a lot of medicine men and they used to be powerful. When we tell that to the priest, they won't believe us. Maybe that's why people slack down, I think. Because when we tell somebody, the white man, somebody asks us questions or we tell a story, they won't believe what happened.⁴⁰

Jacob's explanation for why church attendance has decreased in his community goes beyond repeating Willow Heart's predictions or what happened in the residential schools to the larger presence of the Catholic Church in the northwest, characterized by its refusal to accept Indigenous knowledge, or to believe Indigenous stories. His critique is not about Dene people believing Catholic stories, but that the priests would not in turn recognize the power of local Indigenous stories. Complicating scholarship like Metis Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall's demonstration of a close familial relationship between the priests and their Metis parishioners, Jacob draws attention to the continuing distance between the Church and the people of

⁴⁰ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

northwestern Saskatchewan.⁴¹ His analysis focuses on local people choosing not to go to church because of the inequitable relationship in terms of belief. Jacob did not mention more recent international efforts by the Catholic Church towards enculturation in his explanation of the declining role of the Church in his community.

For Elders of Jacob's generation the entire community belonged to the Catholic Church from birth, though individuals may have varied in their private individual beliefs. Belonging to the Catholic Church included non-religious benefits in the form of relief and social welfare offered by the Church and meant not being socially ostracized as an outsider.⁴² For these Elders faith was visible in church attendance and prayer, though this did not necessarily equal an unwillingness to critique the authoritarian aspects of the Church as an institution or the priests. During the past fifty years the position of Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse as Catholic communities has been shifting, as some community members openly reject the Church and the Catholic faith of their birth, often because of the colonial role of the Church in the region and experiences at residential schools.⁴³

Local trends of younger people not regularly attending church outside of sacraments could be seen to fit more generally with Canadian secularization since the 1950s.⁴⁴ But within this particular local context, some people are rejecting Catholicism and the Catholic aspects of their history because they see it conflicting with their understandings of Indigeneity. By doing so, they are understood as rejecting the Catholic community of their parents and grandparents, leading Jacob to view that the Catholics will soon be gone. In contrast, individuals like Bernie and Chief Paul seem to equate "hardcore" Catholic faith with deference to the Church, and the dismissal of priests abusing children. There is a tendency for individuals to view the faith of

⁴¹ Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

⁴² I expand on these aspects of the Church in the following chapter and in chapters four and five. Outside of the context of Indigenous history, scholarship on Catholicism in Quebecois history has drawn attention to the range of motivations individuals can have for joining a religious community. See for example: Marta Danylewycz's *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

⁴³ It is worth emphasizing here that while the majority of people I interviewed identified experiences at residential schools as significant in their decision to leave the Catholic Church, there is a range of reasons for Indigenous people to belong or not belong to the Church. Some individuals shared positive memories of priests like Father Moraud (discussed in chapters four and five), but are atheists. Others struggle with their Catholic faith because of the Church's stance on issues like Birth Control and same-sex marriage.

⁴⁴ For scholarly discussions of the complexity of secularization during the twentieth century see: *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe: 1945-2000* edited by Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Tina Block, *The Secular Northwest: Religion and Irreligion in Everyday Postwar Life* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

others in absolutes, even when their own personal relationship with Catholicism is more nuanced. Complicating all of this is the sense of Catholicism as a local tradition and the range of ways that individuals and families have negotiated their membership in a historically Catholic community in the face of colonialism.

The stories of Willow Heart in the MLTC collection of Elders' stories did not focus on her assistance to the priests and nuns in 1885. Some accounts in this collection noted other relatives who were involved in helping the refugees at Cross Island. Even though these stories did not include Willow Heart, they drew attention to the significance of Catholicism historically to the Dene in the region. Notably, Ralph Paul explained,

My grandfather used to tell me this that he helped the nuns and priests move to Cross Island. They stayed there during the summer time and when they heard that everything was over they went back to Ile a la Crosse. That's how Cross Island got its name. This kind of history is not taught to our children; even though it might have happened at Batoche, it still affected us here.⁴⁵

From Chief Paul's narrative there is the sense that several from the community may have been involved in helping the priests and nuns move. So while his recounting of Willow Heart did not include her role in helping the oblates, more generally he recognizes the Catholic history of the region. Similarly Elder Ovide Wolverine⁴⁶ shared that the Dene were ready to fight to protect the nuns and priests explaining, "but people here, or some people at that time, I guess they would have had a big battle if them guys [Riel] had come this way. They were all ready, they were all set-up. These guys would come in by river, they would have nailed those guys I think."⁴⁷ I interviewed Ovide once in his home, though we had met before on the highway when my vehicle went in the ditch on my way to Patuanak. Ovide knew Robert Jarvenpa when he worked in Patuanak, and was comfortable with the idea of being interviewed by an outside researcher. Throughout our conversation Ovide indicated his willingness to help me if he knew the answers to my questions, and indicated that he had heard stories from J.B. Solomon and Alex Solomon when he was younger.

Both Ralph Paul and Ovide Wolverine in their recountings of the story of Cross Island shared their sense that local history is not being passed on to English River youth at school. Chief Paul notes that while events at Batoche are discussed, the local implications are left out, leaving

⁴⁵ "Ralph Paul" *Voice of the Elders*, p. 149.

⁴⁶ Ovide's mother was Albertine Jackfish and his Father was Martin Wolverine. For a more detailed introduction to Ovide Wolverine see Appendix A.

⁴⁷ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

young people with a national history to inform their historical consciousness that does not include the story of Cross Island. Ovide shared that when he was younger he only heard stories about Willow Heart a little bit, and that they seemed like fairytale stories being passed on from one generation to the other. He thought that older people in the community would know the stories better. After leaving school, he explained “I never had time to sit with Elders because I was trapping with my dad, after that I started on my own and was away up north, until I married my wife back in sixty-eight. But then I still had to trap and fish, and do some work.” Time at BIRS and working on the trapline meant that Ovide did not have time to learn stories from Elders. Nonetheless, he was familiar with the story of Cross Island, unlike more recent generations. In response to my question if the cross on Cross Island was placed there to help people remember he responded:

A lot of people don't know the story of why it's there. I don't think. Even here today, now the young generation...they wouldn't know, I don't think. Because nowadays, nobody talks about the old days. You tell some stories to the younger generation oh I'm sure, they don't believe it. They think we had this tap water, and the lights, and the T.V....⁴⁸

Even though Ovide himself noted that to stories of Willow Heart sounded like fairytales to his ears, he emphasizes the different realities of current generations and how that has affected younger community members' capacity to believe stories of the past. Here it is not simply an issue of having time to listen to Elders, or a capacity to accept Catholic sounding stories, but that different life experiences make it difficult to make sense of, or even believe, local history.

Individuals in Ile-a-la-Crosse are aware of Cross Island, and local responses to the 1885 resistance, but the community members I have worked with suggested they do not know those stories as well as Elders in Patuanak. Some community members with familial links to Patuanak were more aware of Willow Heart Stories, indicating the significance of kinship connections and life histories in determining Willow Heart's position within Ile-a-la-Crosse historical consciousness. Max Morin was the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006 when I first visited the community. I interviewed Max once in 2014 at the Gabriel Dumont Institute where he worked, with a focus on his father Vital Morin's role in the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Church during the 1970s. We had one formal recorded interview that lasted over two hours. I do not know Max very well, but he seemed comfortable connecting issues back to his own

⁴⁸ Ibid.

political views. In a conversation about resource development in the north, I commented that in Patuanak people sometimes bring up stories of Willow Heart when discussing mining and asked Max if people in Ile-a-la-Crosse tell stories about Willow Heart here? Max responded, “Not that much, no,” before clarifying, “My mom used to talk a little bit about it, not much. She used to tell stories about an old lady from Patuanak that seen visions one time and said all these, foretold all these things that are happening now. My mom used to tell me that, yeah.”⁴⁹ To Max, Willow Heart was associated with Patuanak, and these were stories that were not told very often by Elders in Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Elder Tony Durocher shared that his mother was born at Dipper Lake, and could speak Dene and Cree.⁵⁰ When I asked if she ever shared stories about Willow Heart, Tony responded, “no she never did. I think she didn’t grow up there [Dipper Lake]. She grew up at the convent.”⁵¹ Because she was born out of wedlock, Tony’s mother was raised at Beauval Indian Residential School. Tony suggested that I should speak with his cousin, Ralph Paul, who would know about the story. Although they are cousins, familial and status differences result in Tony identifying as Metis and Chief Paul as Dene. Beyond this, the circumstances of Tony’s mother’s birth further separated her from her Dene family and Dene historical consciousness, beyond marrying a Metis man in Beauval. As I will discuss in more detail in chapter four, it was likely because of a strict Catholic faith that Tony’s mother was sent to BIRS instead of staying with her mother’s family.⁵² The fact that she was essentially raised in the convent and later in life as a young widow sent Tony to school in Ile-a-la-Crosse because she could not afford to look after him, has profoundly shaped Tony’s understanding of the Catholic Church as a place of refuge.

Unlike in Patuanak, historical consciousness in Ile-a-la-Crosse focuses on the escape to Cross Island, rather than the agency of Willow Heart. In fact, it was not until I went to Patuanak that I learned of Willow Heart’s existence, let alone her central role in versions of this story. My initial impression of stories about the Riel family in Ile-a-la-Crosse was that they were mostly reserved for tourists and outsiders.⁵³ The first time I visited Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, several community members suggested visiting Sarah Riel’s grave as a point of interest, for young

⁴⁹ Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014. See Appendix A for a more detailed introduction to Max Morin.

⁵⁰ See chapter one and Appendix A for more information about Tony and my work with him.

⁵¹ Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014.

⁵² Ibid, See also Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript.

⁵³ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes 2006.

historians new to the community. Her grave is located in the section of the cemetery reserved for the priests, brothers, and nuns – separated by a fence and removed from the family clusters where the ancestors of current community members are buried. Although attention was drawn to Sarah Riel being buried in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and to the fact that Louis Riel senior was born there, little additional information or clear connection to the current community was provided.⁵⁴

In the ten years that I have spent periodically and sporadically visiting Ile-a-la-Crosse, there seems to be an increase in public references to Riel, whether at community celebrations during Riel Days, or displays at the local schools about what it means to be Metis that feature Riel and Red River carts. When considering recent historical consciousness in Ile-a-la-Crosse it is worth reflecting on both the story of Cross Island and perceptions of Riel in the community more generally. Some individuals questioned my asking about Riel, pointing out that he had nothing to do with the history of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Others, identified Riel and 1885 as a key moment in the Metis community's history. When I asked the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Duane Favel about stories of Cross Island, he responded:

I don't recollect any of those but certainly know about the stories in terms of the days of the rebellion, 1885. People running to northwest Saskatchewan, and fearing Louis Riel maybe...and certainly we recognize the connection, because Sarah Riel is buried in the cemetery here. And Louis Riel Sr. was in the area, if not community.⁵⁵

In contrast he spoke more confidently about the role of Louis Riel more generally as a Metis icon, and his significance for Ile-a-la-Crosse as a strong Metis community. He explained: "certainly, we're a strong Metis community. We fully recognize our culture and our heritage and

⁵⁴ The bicentennial history of Ile-a-la-Crosse, written by Robert Longpre with the support of the Ile-a-la-Crosse Community Authority devotes considerable attention to demonstrating connections between Louis Riel Sr. and Sarah Riel and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Although the intent seems to be to praise and highlight the connections, they are quite tangential, and elements of the narrative provided could be read to suggest a distance between the Riels and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Longpre begins with the 1815 marriage of North West Company voyageur Jean-Baptiste Riel with Marguerite Boucher, who is described as "a young Chipewyan Metisse from the lands of Ile-A-La-Crosse." Their son, Louis Riel Sr. was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1822, but the family moved to Quebec when he was only five. The next family connection to Ile-a-la-Crosse outlined by Longpre is Sarah Riel's work as a Grey Nun at the Mission. As Longpre explains, "She was the first Metis to enter the order. In 1871 during the month of June, Sara chose to savour exile to the remote frontier, to her ancestral home of Ile-A-La-Crosse." The emphasis on exile to a remote frontier, and later to Sarah's new found missionary commitment upon miraculously being healed in late 1872 (when she took the name Marguerite), like Sarah's separate burial in the cemetery, indicate distance rather than a close, kinship based, connection to the northwest. Robert Longpre, "Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1776-1976 : Sakitawak bi-centennial," (Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan : Ile-a-la-Crosse Bi-Centennial Committee, Ile-a-la-Crosse Local Community Authority, 1977).

⁵⁵ Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

are proud we are a Metis community. And a lot of that history is connected to Louis Riel in terms of him making a stand against the federal government.”⁵⁶

Ironically, even though historically people in Ile-a-la-Crosse did not participate in the 1885 Resistance, current historical consciousness and political rhetoric about what it means to be Metis identifies with the strength and leadership of Riel in framing Ile-a-la-Crosse as a “strong Metis community”⁵⁷ that has stood up against the Church and the government. The current historical consciousness also identifies with a narrative of punishment and exclusion. Some community members understand the difference in their status and rights from neighboring Treaty First Nations and the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Residential School Settlement Agreement as the government still punishing Riel and excluding the Metis.⁵⁸ Mayor Favel explained:

I think every Metis community has some tie with Louis Riel and the courage and the stance that he took to defend the rights of Metis people within (pause) western Canada I guess. Manitoba west...Batoche days coming up. That's where Metis people gathered to tell their stories and visit one another, and take pride in the fact that we are strong leaders.... so I think that's the kind of leadership people try to model in Ile-a-la-Crosse like separating the school from the Church and making those strong stands when they believed in something and they had vision for the community and for Metis people. Change doesn't happen by being passive. Certainly you subject yourself to a lot of scrutiny and criticism when you make a decision that is not a popular one, but one that you know will bring greater strides in the future although it's not recognized....⁵⁹

National narratives where Riel is a prominent figure and symbol in Metis history are made relevant to local experiences, and local histories are connected to a larger Metis identity that could otherwise exclude communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁶⁰ In this way, Riel, like Willow Heart, can be interpreted as an Indigenous leader who stood up for what they thought was right. Similarly, the Catholic and faith aspects of Riel's leadership that may not fit as well with certain understandings of Metis and Indigeneity are not prominent in this historical consciousness. Riel

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁵⁹ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

⁶⁰ The efforts of Metis people in communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse that are on the periphery of a Metis Nation centered around Red River to connect to the national story of that nation is missing in the scholarship of Chris Andersen, and suggests the complexity of Metis identities during the twenty-first century that include responding to national narratives. Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

and Gabriel Dumont are seen as models of strong, male, Metis leadership. As Mayor Favel explained, “I think Metis leaders have a strong tendency to model themselves after Louis Riel.”⁶¹

Max Morin was familiar with the story of Cross Island, but also drew connections with Riel through his understanding of the links between the Riel family and Ile-a-la-Crosse and more forcibly by explaining his own familial ties to Red River and how Ile-a-la-Crosse continued to be related to Louis Riel through Bishop Tache. His recounting included a critique of the priests in Ile-a-la-Crosse for fleeing the mission because of their mistreatment of Riel’s sister Sister Marguerite Riel, and claimed connection to the narrative of the Metis Nation through Bishop Tache. Max noted that some local Metis likely went to Cross Island with the fleeing priests and nuns because, “usually the priests or the nuns didn’t paddle or didn’t do the hard work. Usually it’s people that did the work for them. It was like those explorers that go to Africa and everybody else does the work for them (laughing).”⁶² He also emphasized that the reason the nuns and priests fled was because of their poor treatment of Sister Marguerite Riel and that when local people in Ile-a-la-Crosse heard about what was happening at Batoche they tried to go and help. In response to my question if anyone was successful, Max stated:

I don’t think so. I don’t think so, but they were out to go and assist them because they were sort of landless people to because every place they were going the Metis. My great, on my mom’s side one of my ancestors came from the Red River area, the Carleton area... and got married to my great grandfather and they settled here in Ile-a-la-Crosse so they were familiar with what kind of issues they were dealing with in Manitoba and then eventually in Batoche.⁶³

Max’s response makes a connection between his family and the Metis Nation at Red River and Batoche. Familial connections combined with the experience of being landless enabled his ancestors to understand the issues at Batoche, connecting them to the events of 1885 even though they were in Ile-a-la-Crosse at that time.

As Max continued to make connections between Ile-a-la-Crosse and Riel, he drew my attention to the significance of Bishop Tache. Whereas Max was unsure about the details of Louis Riel Senior in the northwest, explaining, “I think some of the information I have, I think Louis Riel senior spent some time in the northwest,” he more authoritatively spoke about Bishop Tache as “our bishop” who was “involved in Louis Riel that time in Manitoba.”⁶⁴ Whereas

⁶¹ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

⁶² Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

locally the Catholic Church ran from Riel, Max's historical consciousness connecting him to Riel is via Bishop Tache who enables him to connect the Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse to two of the foundational narratives of the Metis Nation.⁶⁵

One can see a local interest in noting connections to the Riel family, as well as the ambiguous and at times contradictory relationship between the community and the Riels in the Ile-a-la-Crosse bicentennial history book. This book was prepared by an outsider to the community, Robert Longpre, and published by the Ile-a-la-Crosse Bi-Centennial Committee, and the Ile-a-la-Crosse Local Community Authority in January 1977. The book includes a mix of narratives researched and written by Longpre with excerpts by local community members, seemingly high school students interviewing their grandparents. The support of the project by the bicentennial committee, as well as references to the work by local community members as an authoritative source on the community's history, suggests that it was well received. The "blue book," as community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse refer to it, has been suggested as an important source to consult since my first visit to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006. Due to of a mix of sources for various sections and a tendency to directly quote primary sources without quotation marks or citations, often taking on the tone of those sources, Longpre's treatment of Riel is inconsistent. This is most apparent in his contrasting praise of the Riel family's connections to Ile-a-la-Crosse, which pays considerable attention to both the birth of Louis Riel Sr. in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Sarah Riel's return there as a missionary, and his depiction of Riel as a dangerous rebel in the account of the priests' and nuns' escape to Cross Island. This inconsistency suggests a tension between making connections to broader Metis national narratives such as those of Riel (1869/70 and again in 1885), and a local history that put the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse in conflict with Riel. Efforts to fit this Metis community into the larger history of the Metis Nation within local historical consciousness then results in conflict.

Although Longpre and others in the community have emphasized the role of Riel in 1885, the inscription on the cross at Cross Island (as well as later missionary correspondence) focuses on the "menacing" role of the Cree (from the Green Lake area): "An inscription reads: 'In this island, the priests, the brothers, the sisters and the Bourgeois stayed during the menacing approach of the rebelling Cree Persecutors, here we sought refuge among the faithful

⁶⁵ Again, local efforts from the periphery of the Metis Nation to connect to national narratives focusing on Red River and Riel complicate scholarship that only focuses on the Red River core, suggesting more complex identity politics during the twenty-first century. Andersen, *Métis*.

Chipewyan's.”⁶⁶ There is no attempt within the Bicentennial book to reconcile the account of the escape to Cross Island with either the stories about the connections of the Riel family to Ile-a-la-Crosse or the other elements of the communities’ depiction of itself as a strong Metis community. The Dene are acknowledged as faithful, but are not central to the account. No mention is made of Willow Heart, though the general outline of the story of missionaries seeking refuge at Cross Island is consistent across accounts. The role that local Metis people played in the escape to Cross Island remains ambiguous in Longpre’s 1970’s retelling, though in my experiences families in Ile-a-la-Crosse have identified strongly as Cree-Metis and with Cree ancestors rather than their Dene kinship connections. Perhaps this ambiguity, as well as the contradiction between a historical consciousness that identifies with Riel and a local story that depicts him, and neighbouring Cree communities, as threats, is why the story is not shared in great detail in Ile-a-la-Crosse.



Figure 2.1: Father Moraud and Dene men erecting a new cross at Cross Island in 1938. Photo from la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

⁶⁶ Longpre, “Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1776-1976,” Accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/robes.html>.

More so than the inscription on the cross erected at Cross Island, the cross itself, visible to travellers from the water, contributes to shaping local historical consciousness in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse of Cross Island and the basic story of missionaries seeking refuge there. During the 1930s Father Louis Moraud erected a new cross on the island with the help of local Dene people. With the marker, Cross Island itself becomes the focus of the story for Indigenous people outside of Patuanak, rather than specific memories of Willow Heart. While working on a community-mapping project in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Elders noted the significance of Cross Island as a place that should be marked, though they recommended consulting with Elders in Patuanak for its exact location, and for more detailed versions of the story. Even within Patuanak, the physical presence of the Cross, and questions that it raises, arguably has helped to maintain the story of Willow Heart and Cross Island in local historical consciousness. During one of my visits to Patuanak, I was taken on a fishing trip by a couple of community members. We passed the cross marker on Cross Island on our trip, at which point my travelling companions pointed out Cross Island to me, and shared parts of the story. More recently, Willow Heart has become the namesake of the only bridge in Patuanak. Again, her connection to a physical marker in the community helps to memorialize her in local historical consciousness. While some younger people claim not to know very many stories about Willow Heart, they still have a general sense of some of her contributions to their community's history.

In this chapter local historical consciousness about Willow Heart has suggested the variety of ways that Catholicism and Indigeneity have and continue to be negotiated by local Indigenous people. In particular, varying interpretations of Willow Heart's prophecies and work with the priests and nuns indicate generational differences regarding what it means to be Catholic, and how and if that can fit with being Dene. Interpretations vary within families, and are influenced by life histories, gender, age, class, and education that result in the privileging of different types of evidence. So whereas Bernie's interpretation of Willow Heart is shaped by her own experiences at BIRS, lectures and readings at University, as well as oral histories from her mother, Bernie's mom seems to have a historical consciousness that is based upon deference to certain religious authorities whom she cannot accept would act in ways other than pious and good (despite testimony from abuse victims). Others, like Jacob, draw on personal experience, reflection, as well as oral histories from his grandfather. Like Ralph Paul, Jacob identifies a decline in Catholicism, but this is interpreted with sadness after 87 years of Catholic belief.

Jacob's belief has space for being critical of religious authorities. In this way, the above recountings not only reflect different historical consciousness, but different ways of understanding how to understand history. Moving from Patuanak to Ile-a-la-Crosse, has suggested how historical consciousness about 1885 is further shaped by status and Metis identities, as some who identify as Metis struggle to negotiate a regional story of fearing Riel with identifying with belonging to the Metis Nation. The significance of status and kinship as factors shaping local historical consciousness will be explored in the next chapter that considers Willow Heart, the Church, and the Treaty/Scrip Commission of 1906.

Chapter Three

Individuals I spoke with have situated Willow Heart within their historical consciousness by focusing on her roles helping the priests when they first arrived, the assistance she provided to the refugees at Cross Island, and perhaps most significantly, her predictions of the future. A seemingly less well-known story, or one that was not directly shared with me, is her role in the negotiations of Treaty Ten at Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1906.¹ Initially, the chiefs and headmen appear to have been persuaded by Willow Heart, as they are remembered as having asked the Treaty Commission for more time to decide. The situation changed when Father Rapet slapped her across the face. It was following this expression of colonial violence and power that the chiefs and headmen signed the treaty.² In response, some community members remember Willow Heart for warning the priests that there would come a time when their influential role in the world would change - when they would dress like ordinary men. This event does not seem to be told as frequently as the account of her general ability to predict the future or the assistance she gave at Cross Island in 1885. This chapter considers this less well-known story of Willow Heart before exploring the role of the Church within local historical consciousness of the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission.

Treaty status affects local historical consciousness, as the allocation of treaty and scrip was in many ways divisive in the region. However, stories about the commission and the life histories of those who share them, suggest more complicated kinship connections that have continued to cross status lines. The chapter begins by focusing on the significance of the Church in the decision of the English River First Nation to sign Treaty Ten, before considering the role of the Church in petitioning the government for the Treaty/Scrip Commission. The chapter concludes with a discussion of scrip and the historical consciousness of those whose ancestors did not take treaty and who today identify with the Metis Nation.

¹ The Treaty/Scrip Commission for Treaty Ten in 1906 was closely modeled on the Treaty/Scrip Commission for Treaty Eight. J. A. J. McKenna, was to serve as both the treaty and the scrip commissioner, individuals had to choose whether they would take treaty or scrip. Those who elected to take treaty would receive a gratuity, annuity payments, and the setting aside of land for reserves. Those who elected to take scrip could choose between land scrip, a land grant of 240 acres, or the equivalent in money scrip. The English River Band signed Treaty Ten on August 28th 1906. Treaty No. 10 and Reports of Commissioners, 1907, (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966) p. 62.

² Rose Campbell, Interview with David McIntyre, May 2006, as quoted in Peter Dodson et al., *In Their Own Land: Treaty Ten and the Canoe Lake, Clear Lake, and English River Bands*, (Saskatoon SK: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2006) pp. 24-25.

I learned of the story of Willow Heart's involvement in the negotiation of Treaty Ten through an earlier oral history project conducted by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) in 2006. I was unable to access the complete interviews through the OTC, so have relied on the extensive segments quoted in the publication.³ In the publication, one of the Elders from Patuanak, Rose Campbell,⁴ shared this particular feature of Willow Heart's story. Elder Rose Campbell explained,

That is time my grandmother Tka-Taie (Willow Heart) said to the priest, "On this day you are even glad when you slap me, but in the future, you are gonna get to that point. You say you are witnesses to God to even arrive here at the treaty negotiations." That's what Willow Heart said. This Elderly lady debated the people. She was a very wise person. "You walk around here with long robes, saying you are like Jesus. In the near future, you are gonna get out of these clothes and we won't even tell you are priests. There is only one small thing that you are going to have when it's nearing the end. That is how people will know you are priests. These you are going to give us we will not make a living on it." That is what the Elderly lady told them. That Elderly lady was right, all she had said has come true. She wasn't lying. She lived here for a long time on this earth. What she has spoken of we see it all today. She mentioned that. "When our kids are taught in school in the white man's way, all of our traditions will be lost." That is what she said and that is how it is today.⁵

In this telling of Willow Heart's story, her predictions of the future seem almost like a curse. In response to being publicly slapped across the face by Father Rapet, Willow Heart makes her predictions – many of which directly relate to the shifting role of the Church in the northwest and beyond, as well as to the consequences of the residential school system. While the predictions themselves are similar to other accounts of Willow Heart's prophecies, in Rose Campbell's story, the context of her predictions is provided. The description of the priest being glad when he slaps Willow Heart across the face is in stark contrast to stories of her as an essential teacher and provider to missionaries when they initially arrived and again in 1885. This suggests a shifting relationship and power dynamic between the priests at the mission and the Indigenous people of the northwest, and more specifically a gendered component in the shift in the position of Dene women like Willow Heart. Although Willow Heart addresses her comments to the priest who

³ I contacted Peter Dodson and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) about consulting the original interviews. I later learned that the files at the OTC had yet to be catalogued.

⁴ Rose Campbell was born December 4th 1919 at Cree Lake. Growing up her family lived in Patuanak, Sucker Point, Ile-a-la-Crosse and Cree Lake. After she married she lived in Cree Lake for two years before moving to Patuanak. "Rose Campbell," *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p. 105.

⁵ Rose Campbell, Interview with David McIntyre, pp. 24-25.

slapped her, the fact that the treaty was signed implicates the male leadership in siding with Father Rapet rather than Willow Heart. In this way there is a shift from an Indigenous woman helping to establish and maintain the mission to the missionaries, male chiefs, and headmen making decisions that exclude spiritually powerful women like Willow Heart. Finally, the apparent truth of Willow Heart's predictions in Rose Campbell's retelling once again returns the power and authority to Willow Heart. Even though she is slapped and her concerns are dismissed in 1906, fundamentally her predictions of both the decline of the priesthood and the consequences for her community, notably regarding the effects of residential schools, are seen as true.⁶

This story of Willow Heart that is not as widely shared illustrates several factors regarding Catholicism in the northwest. In addition to the shifting roles of Indigenous women discussed above, the story when considered with other Willow Heart stories and other sources of the treaty negotiations draws attention to shifting relationships with the Church during an individual's life. Rose Campbell's story complicates more recent understandings of earlier generations who are seen as deferring to the Church, suggesting that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a variety of ways that Indigenous people negotiated being Dene and Catholic, and that this could change throughout an individual's life.

The stories of Willow Heart writing Dene hymns, teaching the missionaries the Dene language and songs, and later helping the evacuees at Cross Island signifies a support of the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church. Willow Heart is consistently a powerful figure, sharing her knowledge and expertise with the clergy, and her actions imply that the Catholic faith was personally meaningful to her. Even though there can be a tendency within communities and scholarship to dismiss those who identify as Catholic as blindly supporting the Church, this is clearly not the case with Willow Heart. In Rose Campbell's story, Willow Heart, the only woman present at the negotiations is also the only voice of dissent. She is willing to go against

⁶ This is the only recounting of this story that I have been able to find. Willow Heart's predictions of the decline of the priesthood are more widely told, as are stories of Father Rapet's involvement in the Treaty Ten negotiations. This particular story provides more of a chronology to her predictions, where they seem to be the result of a particular event. Other Elders in the *Voice of the Elders* collection emphasized how much Willow Heart was respected by the Church and HBC. A Rose Campbell from English River, who I believe to be the same Rose Campbell interviewed for the *In Their Own Lands*, was also interviewed for the *Voice of the Elders* collection in 2006. In this interview she mentions Willow Heart, but does not tell the story of her at the negotiations for Treaty Ten. In *Voice of the Elders*, she focuses on predictions of drugs and alcohol, and the negative consequences of the highway. She concludes by saying, "That's all I can say for now," perhaps indicating that she ended the interview before sharing other Willow Heart stories. See "Rose Campbell," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 107.

the Church's recommendation, even after being publicly assaulted by Father Rapet. Like Elders I have spoken with such as Jacob Estralshenan, Willow Heart's faith did not prevent her from critiquing Church practices, or advocating for her community. Willow Heart distinguishes between her Catholic faith and the actions of individual priests—critiquing priests for saying they are like Jesus, when their actions contradict this sentiment. She questioned their invocation of themselves as God's witnesses in their efforts to convince the community to sign the treaty, interrogating the sincerity of the spiritual claims of the priests. In the retelling of the story, the fact that her predictions are seen to be true, adds to the veracity of her spiritual power.

This particular Willow Heart story also suggests divisions within the English River First Nation. While Willow Heart was against the treaty, ultimately Chief Apesis and his headman decide to follow Rapet's advice and sign Treaty Ten. Reviewing Commissioner McKenna's report of the signing of Treaty Ten in Ile-a-la-Crosse, it seems that those speaking for the English River Band wanted federal assistance in times of distress and support for the old and indigent, medicine, expressed concerns about keeping hunting rights, and wanted education for their children, specifically that public aid be given to the mission schools.⁷ Willow Heart's predictions that they would not make a living off of what was promised, and that their children would lose their traditions if taught in the "white man's way," suggests division within the community regarding these treaty negotiations. Willow Heart predicts that the promises made will not be fulfilled and have negative consequences on future generations. Stories of Willow Heart's predictions are more widely told, but the retellings do not typically emphasize division within the community focusing instead on the power and significance of a local woman.

All of this raises a fundamental question for me—why is the story of Willow Heart at the negotiations for Treaty Ten not more widely told? I learned of this story from researcher Peter Dodson, author of the 2006 book *In Their Own Land*, who described it as the most memorable local story of the treaty negotiations he heard. The story did not come up in any of my own interviews with community members in Patuanak, even though I asked about the signing of Treaty Ten and Willow Heart.⁸ I am unable to definitively explain the absence of this particular

⁷ JA McKenna, Commissioner, to The Hon Frank Oliver, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907, in "General Housekeeping Records And Correspondence Regarding Ile-A-La-Crosse Treaty. (Maps And Charts)," Volume 4006, File no. 241209-1, Item 188, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸ I asked community members about Willow Heart and about Treaty Ten, but did not specifically ask about Willow Heart at the treaty negotiations or ask those I spoke with to respond to Rose Campbell's story of Willow Heart being slapped by Father Rapet.

story in my own interviews, and can only reflect on possible reasons for its exclusion. This could indicate a shift in local historical consciousness within the community since 2006, though it more likely suggests variations in local historical consciousness between families.

In 2006, Rose Campbell was the only individual to share this particular story, possibly due to her gender and personal relationship to Willow Heart who she identified as her grandmother, though this could also have been a way of showing respect. Several men from Patuanak interviewed in 2006 by local community member Max McIntyre noted Rapet's role in the negotiations, but did not mention Willow Heart's presence, Rapet slapping her, or connect her predictions of the future to the treaty negotiations. Similarly, the MLTC's collection of Elders' stories does not include this Willow Heart Story.⁹ This trend was echoed in my own interviews, where community members noted the role of the Church and Rapet in particular as a reason why the treaty was signed, but did not mention Willow Heart in this particular context. My interviewing style, and focus on local historical consciousness meant that I tried to ask fairly open ended questions, such as "do you know any stories about Willow Heart," or "did you hear stories about when Treaty Ten was signed," and did not explicitly ask about this particular story.

One community member I spoke with noted Willow Heart's presence at the negotiations as the only woman, and shared a picture of her from the negotiations. She is in the center of the picture with several older men. Four priests sit in the front row. Robert Jarvenpa discussed this picture with George and Catherine Paul in 1979.¹⁰ They were able to identify the first chief, Apešis, as well as some other men in the photo. They didn't know the woman's name, but described her as a Dene woman who was instructing the clergy in the Dene language. Even though Jarvenpa's own work focused on the male trapping economy, he was also interested in local expressions of Catholicism, especially around the Father Moraud pilgrimage. His field notes that include conversations with several community members make no mention of Willow Heart. It is possible, that while the story of the treaty negotiations is not widely told, other stories have been gaining resurgence within the community.

⁹ "Rose Campbell," *Voice of the Elders*, p.107.

¹⁰ "George and Catherine Paul, JB Gar, Patuanak, Saskatchewan June 9, 1979, 3:00-3:45 p.m.," in Robert Jarvenpa, Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory (1979) VI-D-38M R, Canadian Museum of History Archives.



Figure 3.1: Willow Heart at negotiations for Treaty Ten. Scan taken by Evon McIntyre of a photo in Max McIntyre's collection.

Several community members I interviewed were willing to critique the Church and the Catholic elements in local stories about Willow Heart and the treaty negotiations, so deference to the Church is not likely the cause for not sharing this particular story. In fact, this story would have added to Bernie Eaglechild's critique of the Catholic way her mother shared the story of Cross Island. Because of my outsider status, and intent of sharing the stories I gathered in my dissertation and publications, it is also possible that the story of Willow Heart at the negotiation of Treaty Ten is a story that is known but not shared publicly with outsiders. A possible reason for this is that the first Chief and his headmen fundamentally sided with Father Rapet over Willow Heart. It would be difficult to reconcile this story with a narrative of the positive and insightful intentions of the first chief – a man who others interviewed are related to. There are certainly individuals I spoke with who noted broken treaty promises and questioned the Church's motives in encouraging people to sign the treaty in 2006. But, there is also a celebratory local

narrative around the first chief and a difficulty for some to fully critique the treaty, which protects Aboriginal rights and is seen as a nation-to-nation agreement. Perhaps this is why the more widely, publicly shared stories of Willow Heart focus on the her role teaching the priests Dene and otherwise helping the Church as well as her prophecies, rather than the treaty negotiations.

Willow Heart did not prominently feature in the stories that were shared with me about the signing of Treaty Ten. Rather, those I spoke with emphasized the role of the Church and Father Rapet in the negotiations. Rapet served as a priest in Ile-a-la-Crosse from 1881 (when he was twenty five years old) to 1898, and again from 1901-1915.¹¹ A hesitancy to sign the treaty was central to several interviews that I conducted, and is also apparent in Jarvenpa's fieldnotes and the interviews conducted for *In Their Own Land* in 2006, though this hesitancy is attributed to Chief Apeisis and other men rather than to Willow Heart.¹² When taken together these accounts of Father Rapet's role in the negotiations and the Willow Heart story demonstrate the political power of the Catholic Church in the treaty negotiations as well as local agency in pushing for particular promises from the treaty commissioner. There are some shifts in stories of Father Rapet's involvement between Jarvenpa's fieldwork in 1979, the *In their Own Land* Collection in 2006, and my own fieldwork in 2013/2014. Robert Jarvenpa recorded some of Frank McIntyre's stories in his field notes in 1979.¹³ Jarvenpa explained that Frank spoke extensively about the

¹¹ Historian Timothy Foran explains Rapet's removal from the mission between 1898 and 1901. According to Bishop Pascal, Rapet "was no longer a suitable superior for Saint-Jean-Baptiste as he had grown weary and sullen after seventeen years in that position." Rapet's return to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1901 is included on a timeline provided by the Archdiocese of Keewatin- Le Pas in 1996, though this document makes no mention of Rapet's removal. By 1906, Rapet had spent over two decades in Ile-a-la-Crosse and surrounding areas. He would have been well known to those signing the treaty in 1906. Timothy Foran, "'Les Gens De Cette Place': Oblates And The Evolving Concept Of *Métis* At Ile-À-La-Crosse, 1845-1898," (PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2011), 95. See also, "The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years," Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/rcindex.html>.

¹² Commissioner McKenna notes an initial difficulty in negotiating Treaty Ten that generally supports the oral accounts, though it does not make specific mention of Willow Heart. He wrote, "It appeared for a time as if there would be some considerable difficulty in effecting a settlement on the lines of the treaty, for it was evident from the trend of the talk of the leaders among the Indians that there had been at work an influence which tended to make them regard the treaty as a means of enslaving them. I was able to disabuse their minds of this absurd notion and to make it clear that the government's object was simply to do for them what had been done for neighbouring Indians when the progress of trade or settlement began to interfere with the untrammelled exercise of their aboriginal privileges as hunters." In his report, it is himself and not Father Rapet that leads to the signing of the treaty. In particular, the notion that the treaty could enslave the communities fits with Rose Campbell's story of Willow Heart's concerns about the treaty. Like in Rose Campbell's story, McKenna notes, "By the end of the day, the treaty was signed and the annuity and gratuity moneys paid." See McKenna, to Frank Oliver Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907.

¹³ I accessed Robert Jarvenpa's field notes through the Archives at the Museum of History. Jarvenpa worked with male trappers in Patuanak for his dissertation. In 1975 and 1979 he returned to Patuanak with his wife Hetty-Joe Brumbach to conduct additional ethnohistorical and ethnoarchaeological work. From his field notes, it

signing of Treaty Ten, referencing Alex Solomon as the source of much of his information. In 1979, Frank shared, “most of the older people in Patuanak today know little of these matters.”¹⁴ This statement could be an effort by an individual to draw attention to the significance of their own knowledge, but it also indicates that oral accounts of the treaty negotiations were not widely known or discussed by 1979. In 2006, Frank was one of eight Elders interviewed from English River about Treaty Ten for the OTC publication. During my own interviews, there were few individuals who were willing to discuss the treaty negotiations in great detail, and those who had stories had been interviewed before. There were more people in Patuanak that had stories about the negotiations than in Ile-a-la-Crosse, but these were not lengthy or detailed descriptions.

In 1979, Frank depicted the young Father Rapet as wanting to have authority in the community. Jarvenpa writes, “Frank also noted that the Catholic priests at Ile-a-la-Crosse, particularly Father Rapet, wanted to act as spokesman for the Indians - or at least have the appearance of being leaders in the Indian community.”¹⁵ Here Rapet is posturing, attempting to look like a leader in the community when in fact he is not. In this telling, it is not simply Willow Heart who rejects Father Rapet’s authority. In the account recorded by Jarvenpa in 1979, Frank identifies Raphael Young who was working for the federal government in some capacity as the man who critiqued Rapet, telling him “It is very well for you to have an influence over these people. But just remember- if these people sign the treaty now - and if they have any problems with this treaty in the future - they will come to you. You will take responsibility for this treaty.” In response to this critique Rapet “faded into the background and said no more.”¹⁶ Rather than a

becomes apparent that neither Jarvenpa nor Brumbach spoke the Dene language. Their informants are therefore often people closer to their own ages who spoke English. As a result, they worked with many of the same people I have worked with. On the one hand this provides a glimpse into Patuanak during the 1970s, and earlier recountings of some stories by community members. However, the notes also include deeply personal information about community members that they likely did not know was being recorded. At times in the notes there is a judgmental and even racist tone, and it seems that Jarvenpa and Brumbach spent significant time with other “white” individuals in the community who worked at the school or HBC, whose views of the community seem to be reflected prominently in the notes. For these reasons I have attempted to use the notes with care – trying to refer to information where the community member was well aware that what they were sharing could be used for academic purposes.

Jarvenpa spent considerable time with Frank McIntyre in 1979, as Frank served as a guide for Jarvenpa’s research trip to Cree Lake. In the notes, Jarvenpa comments on Frank’s concerns about how he (Frank) is perceived in his community, and Frank’s sense that people may not accept stories from him. I was also able to interview Frank in 2013. Frank was recommended to me by some in English River as an Elder who would be good to talk to.

¹⁴ Robert Jarvenpa, “Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory” (1979) VI-D-38M R, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “13 July 1979,” in Jarvenpa, “Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory” (1979) VI-D-38M R Box 333 Folder 2, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

Dene woman critiquing Rapet and receiving a slap for her efforts, it is a male employee of the federal government causing a humbled priest to fade into the background. In this account he is a weak figure, trying to claim authority, but unwilling to take responsibility.

Frank's accounts of the signing of Treaty Ten are also featured in the *In Their Own Land* book. His son Max McIntyre interviewed him, and lengthy block quotes from that interview are included in the OTC publication. Here, Frank shares a story of the first Chief of English River, Apesis and the Clear Water River Chief Raphael refusing to negotiate with the commissioner, or to be swayed by the priests. No mention of Young is made in this account, and one wonders if Raphael Young, and Chief Raphael might be the same individual, wrongly conflated in Jarvenpa's notes. Frank explained,

The Indian commissioner said, "you take the money now and in the future we will negotiate because we are in a hurry, because where we're going is far away." So Apesis and Raphael replied, "then how is it going to be when you are in a hurry? If you're in a hurry for something and you want to negotiate in the future, it won't be good. In the future, there will be a lot of people and we are speaking for them. If you are in a hurry, then just go, if you are in a rush." ... The next day, the priests were going from person to person amongst the people, saying, "the Indian commissioners are in a hurry," but we cannot negotiate in this.¹⁷

Frank's emphasis is on the rushed negotiations, the refusal of Chiefs like Apesis and Raphael to negotiate that way, and efforts by the priests to bring them back to the negotiation table.¹⁸ In this account it is Apesis and Raphael who are critical of the initial offer, though they eventually sign the treaty. The priests do not sway them, and there is no mention of Willow Heart. Frank has familial connections to Chief Apesis, and served as the Chief of English River himself from 1965-1969. When I spoke to him, he was ninety-three years old, and identified treaty status as essential to the success of the First Nation, in spite of continued oppression and racism under the Indian Act. To Frank, the Indian Act prevented English River from truly gaining local autonomy.¹⁹ The short negotiation time for Treaty Ten is also apparent in the report of Commissioner McKenna, and in the fact that he brought a template of Treaty Eight and initially wanted those in the northwest to sign on without negotiations.²⁰

In other accounts by community members recorded in 2006, and in my own more recent

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Peter Dodson et al., *In Their Own Land*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Frank McIntyre, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 20 August 2013. Frank passed away on September 30th 2015.

²⁰ JA McKenna, Commissioner, to The Hon Frank Oliver, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907.

interviews, the priests, and Father Rapet in particular, are seen as the convincing factor in the decision of the English River First Nation to sign Treaty Ten. Although Chief Apesis had hesitated to sign the treaty because of the rushed negotiations, he was fundamentally convinced to sign three days later because of the priest. In response to my question if the priest was present when the treaty was signed, Jacob Estralshenan explained,

Yeah the priest was there, that's how they signed that treaty, the priest. People didn't want to sign that treaty, they had to wait three days before they signed it... that was in Ile-a-la-Crosse. People come they said they wanted to get that thing done right away. There used to be a leader, a long time ago, now there's chiefs. You used to pick an Elder to be like a chief. What he says, you have to do....So that person didn't want to sign that treaty. So they said they're in a rush. He said, 'if you're in a rush you better go.' But the priest talked him out of that, that's what happened, that's how they signed the treaty.²¹

Jacob's account clearly connects the priest's advice with the decision to sign the treaty, even though the negotiations were rushed and the chief did not initially want to sign. When he was interviewed in 2006 by his cousin Max McIntyre for the *In Their Own Land* book, Noel McIntyre commented not only on the role of the priest in convincing the Dene to come back to the treaty negotiations, but also explained why the people at that time would have listened to the priests. Noel explained, "then Pere Rapet met the Dene People and said, "These people that come here to you, it is something good for you." Because in the old days, people who were priests were listened to. It was at the request of the priest that the people come back."²² In Noel's recounting, it was because Father Rapet advocated for the treaty and its benefits that the Dene people returned to the negotiations. More significantly for the discussion here, Noel explains that this was because priests were "listened to" in the old days. His explanation of why Father Rapet was able to convince people to sign the treaty indicates both the spiritual and political power of Father Rapet in 1906, and suggests that the roles of priests in English River have changed in the one hundred years since, thus the need for him to explain why the priest's word would have been so influential. The political and spiritual power of the priests was echoed by Ovide Wolverine²³ who

²¹ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013. Jacob's recounting in 2013 complemented what he shared in 2006, where he paid particular attention to the role of Father Rapet and Rapet's explanation that the people would be better off if they signed the treaty. See Jacob Est, Interviewed by David McIntyre May 2006, as quoted in Dodson et al., p 23-24.

²² Noel McIntyre, Interviewed by David McIntyre May 2006 as quoted in Dodson et al., p 24. See also Jacob Est, as quoted in Dodson, p 23-24.

²³ I formally interviewed Ovide Wolverine once. For more information about Ovide and my work with him see Appendix A.

explained, “So finally some Elders said, ‘okay this guy’s [the priest] working for God, so he must be telling the truth, so let’s sign.’ You know that’s how they signed the treaty.”²⁴

The relationship between Dene people and the priests in Noel McIntyre and Ovide Wolverine’s accounts offer an explanation of why Chief Apesis may have chosen to side with the priest. Considering these accounts with Rose Campbell’s recounting, one can see the ambiguous but also increasingly powerful role of the Catholic Church in the northwest in 1906. The fact that the English River First Nation fundamentally signed the treaty indicates that at that time the majority or those in power either respected Father Rapet, or needed his continued support, enough to listen to him instead of Willow Heart.

When moving the conversation from describing the roles of the priests during the 1906 negotiation of Treaty Ten, to analyzing the reasons for their extensive involvement, those I interviewed had less to say. The opaqueness around the motives of the missionaries in this event again suggests a distance between the priests and those they served. Jacob responded to my question with the following observation, “I don’t know, that’s what I don’t know... I couldn’t say (pause). Maybe they had something to do with the government, them priests. They help each other, I don’t know. They’ll never tell their stories anyways.”²⁵ Jacob’s answer highlights both community uncertainties around the reasons why Father Rapet was encouraging the Dene to sign the treaty, as well as his sense that the priests may have been working with the government. This supports my earlier assertions around the visible political and spiritual roles of the priests while signifying that the varying functions they served within the northwest were not always clear to the Indigenous people who lived and live in the region. I am suggesting throughout this dissertation that understanding the political and spiritual power of the priests is necessary to understanding how colonialism has functioned in the north, though this has often been ambiguous. Jacob concludes his point by noting that the priests will never tell their stories, again suggesting a distance and division between the priests and their parishioners. Within the broader context of my conversation with Jacob the issue arose of priests expecting the Dene to believe their stories while ironically and hypocritically refusing to believe or acknowledge Dene stories of spiritual power. The theme of what stories are believed and not believed, coupled with Jacob’s

²⁴ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014. Ralph Paul also noted that the priests added solemnity to the treaty making process, emphasizing, “The Dene trusted the priest.” Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 32.

²⁵ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

reference to priest's deliberate silences and withholding of information, suggests that the priests and the Dene do not have the same stories even when they share the Catholic faith and understand themselves to be part of a Catholic community.

The treaty/scrip negotiations were likely held in Ile-a-la-Crosse rather than the other outlying communities to make travel simpler for the Treaty Commission. The prominent position of the mission at that location in 1906 suggests the role that the priests and Catholic faith likely played in the negotiations from the perspectives of local Catholics. In 1906, there was no village at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and most of the people who met there lived across the lake, and throughout the Churchill River system. The mission, the school, and the trading post dominated Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1906. Stories are still told of how tents would be set up near the mission whenever the people of the region journeyed there for religious holidays or other events. Vye Bouvier, a local scholar in Ile-a-la-Crosse recorded the story of her aunt, Victoria Iron Bouvier, who was six years old when the treaty was signed. Victoria's father was the Chief of the Canoe Lake First Nation, and her mother, Margaret Marie Daigneault, was a Cree Metis from Ile-a-la-Crosse. Victoria explained,

My father, Jean Iron, was the first chief of Canoe Lake reserve (Nehiyow Opasehk). He signed Treaty 10 in Ile-A-La-Crosse in 1906. I was there too, I was six at the time. Monsigneur (Bishop) Pascal was there visiting people in their "megiwahp" (tepee lodges) at the tip of the peninsula. There were no houses situated there at the time, but tepee would spring up whenever there was a church occasion or treaty day. The people of Ile-A-La-Crosse lived in the surrounding area.²⁶

In this way, the form of the treaty negotiations of people journeying to Ile-a-la-Crosse and camping there mirrored that of religious holidays and celebrations. The attendance of the bishop, and location of the negotiations near the mission, would have made the treaty negotiations in some way a religious event, showcasing how the political and spiritual were intertwined at the 1906 negotiations.

The roles of Father Rapet and Bishop Pascal in the 1906 negotiations of Treaty Ten draw attention to the combined political and spiritual roles of Catholic Church officials in the northwest at the turn of the twentieth century. Beyond oral histories that repeatedly refer to the roles of the priests during the negotiations, the extensive involvement of the priests in petitioning

²⁶ Vye Bouvier, "Victoria Bouvier," (1983) in *Les Metisse... Mothers and Grandmothers*, accessed 10 February 2017, <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/motherstwo.html>.

for the Treaty/Scrip Commission on behalf of community members, and in supporting the work of the commission itself, is apparent in the archival record. The archival record also emphasizes local concerns around relief and support for the elderly and destitute—support that had previously been provided through the Church and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), and that with the signing of Treaty Ten become the responsibility of the federal government. Records from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) further show the developing role of priests as intermediaries with the federal government and providers of welfare to the destitute, evident in petitions to the government on behalf of their parishioners and the acknowledged involvement of the Bishop of Prince Albert in the Treaty/Scrip Commission.

In their petitions, the role of the Church and HBC is apparent in providing relief to destitute Indigenous people, notably the elderly, widows, and children living north of the boundaries of Treaty Six. Like the story of Willow Heart, some of the petitions to the federal government make connections between the loyalty of northern Indigenous peoples in 1885 in calls for the government to provide aid, and eventually negotiate a treaty. The earliest petition from the Ile-a-la-Crosse district was sent in 1883 – before the events of 1885, and twenty-three years before Treaty Ten would be signed. This petition was sent via the Bishop of St. Albert,²⁷ from the “Chiefs of the Montagnais” (typically the term used to refer to the Dene people of the district) asking for relief and thanking the government for previous assistance. The request asked for food and clothing for the aged and sick, indicating an increased need for relief in the region and the roles of local missionaries and bishops in either supplying relief or advocating for assistance by writing to the government. In these records, there is a consistent desire to gain increased government support for the Indigenous peoples of the northwest, and several seem to be written in the voices of local Indigenous petitioners.²⁸ This could be from a sincere want to

²⁷ The Oblate Mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse has been placed under various diocese, vicariates, and archdiocese. During the events of 1885, the mission was part of the Diocese of St Albert. In 1891, the mission became part of the new Vicariate of Prince Albert, under the jurisdiction of Bishop Albert Pascal. In 1907 the vicariate became the Diocese of Prince Albert. In 1910, Ile-a-la-Crosse was included in the new Apostolic Vicariate of Keewatin. The Apostolic Vicariate of Keewatin became the Archdiocese of Keewatin – Le Pas on July 22nd 1967. See “The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years.”

²⁸ For example, see Mission de l’Île a la crosse, au tres honourable Sir J Macdonald, 28 Juillet 1883, “General Housekeeping Records And Correspondence Regarding Ile-A-La-Crosse Treaty. (Maps And Charts),” Volume 4006, File no. 241209-1, Library and Archives Canada; From Rapet, Ile a la Crosse, to Monsieur Garnot, 13 February 1902, in “General Housekeeping Records And Correspondence Regarding Ile-A-La-Crosse Treaty. (Maps And Charts),” Volume 4006, File no. 241209-1, Library and Archives Canada; From Rapet, Ile a la Crosse, to Monsieur Garnot, 7 April 1902, in “General Housekeeping Records And Correspondence Regarding Ile-A-La-Crosse Treaty. (Maps And Charts),” Volume 4006, File no. 241209-1, Library and Archives Canada.

help their parishioners, as well as an increasing need to supplement the mission's own finances. The government would only sporadically provide support for schools in the region, citing the absence of a treaty as its reason.²⁹ In facilitating the treaty to be signed, the oblates would potentially be able to receive more regular support for boarding schools in the northwest. They would also potentially be able to shift the burden of providing a social safety net to the federal government. Finally, individual financial interests may have also been factors, as there is evidence that some of the priests, and even the bishop were involved in purchasing scrip.³⁰

Because the Ile-a-la-Crosse district was outside of treaty boundaries in the late nineteenth century, the issue of treaty was intricately tied to requests for relief, as the government only felt obligated to supply relief to those with whom they had signed treaties. Responding to requests for support for the mission run school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, the federal government explained that they only provide significant assistance to areas covered by treaty, though they periodically and inconsistently provided support to areas where treaties had yet to be signed. For example, in a letter to Sir John A Macdonald, his Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs noted of the Bishop of St Albert's letter, "This application reopens the question of what additional assistance, if any is to be given to Indians so located (they have been receiving assistance in ammunition and twine for the last few years)..."³¹ As the territory was outside of treaty limits, ammunition and twine for nets was all that the government was willing to supply.

In tension with a hesitation to provide relief was the concern over being seen as responsible for starvation. As the Deputy Superintendent General explained, "It is in the interest of humanity very desirable that the government should offer them assistance, as their condition at many points is very wretched."³² By 1904 the bulk of relief for northerners continued to be provided through the HBC and the Church. In a DIA memorandum it was noted that:

The Indians of Isle a la Crosse and Portage La Loche cost us very little. The relief to the destitute is in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company and last year we paid accounts as follows: Portage La Loche 76.52; Ile-a-la-Crosse, 287.12. We

²⁹ For a discussion of local oblate efforts to obtain funding for the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and the relationship between funding for boarding schools and treaties, see "Les Gens De Cette Place," pp. 83, 183-188.

³⁰ See Frank Tough and Leah Dorion, "'The claims of the half-breeds...have finally been closed': A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip," unpublished research report for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993. In *For Seven generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, CD-ROM, (Ottawa: Libraxus, 1997).

³¹ "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, Item 13. LAC.

³² Ibid.

have the Indian Boarding School at Isle a la Crosse for which we supply a grant for 20 pupils at 72.00. This is all we do for these Indians.³³

Following the 1885 Resistance, and resulting shifts in Indian policy to cut expenses and be more authoritarian,³⁴ the Bishop of St Albert once again petitioned Macdonald and his government to provide relief to the Indians of the Ile-a-la-Crosse region. Translated from French by Father Lacombe, the letter refers to the behavior of the Dene in assisting the priests in 1885 as a reason why the federal government should provide some relief to the Indigenous people of the region. The letter explains,

It is with regard to the Montagnais Chipewyan's and particularly those of the district of Ile a la Crosse. These Indians gentlemen, are far from being like those of the prairies, they are every one of them Christian, [?], and industrious, and the government has never found a rebel amongst them, at least as long as they are not driven to it by their wretchedness, for then they showed themselves as violent as they have been tardy in uprising.³⁵

The petition emphasizes the limits of hunting in the area and unsuitability of many parts of it for agriculture. As a result, relief was needed, as was government support for hospitals and schools.

Just one year after the missionaries escape to Cross Island, where they played the role of refugees dependent on their Dene hosts, the bishop takes a very paternalistic stance in his discussion of ways to support these same communities in need of relief. A shift in the power dynamic between the Church and Indigenous people of the region is already apparent. No committee was formed, but the Church, HBC, and later the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officials in northern communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse would come to be the self-appointed decision makers, dominating committees and local affairs until the movement for community control in the 1970s.³⁶

By 1902, Ile-a-la-Crosse was included in the Apostolic Vicariate of Saskatchewan, under the jurisdiction of Bishop Albert Pascal. Bishop Pascal and Father Rapet petitioned the Governor

³³ Accountant Memorandum for the Deputy Supt. General of Indian Affairs, 5 May 1904 "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, Item 112, LAC.

³⁴ See for example, Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the Northwest Rebellion* (Fifth House Books, Calgary, 1997); Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Indian Policy* (McGill-Queens University Press: Kingston Ontario, 1993).

³⁵ Bishop of St Albert to Sir John A Macdonald, Translated and delivered by Father Lacombe, Letter 13 February 1886. "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

³⁶ See my more detailed discussion of the movement for local control in chapters six and seven.

General and the Prime Minister regarding the extinguishment of Aboriginal title in their region.³⁷ Because scrip had been issued to “all other half-breeds” in the Northwest Territories, and the Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse had suffered significant losses to their livelihood (including their homes) they requested that scrip be issued to them during the coming summer and that the Commissioner be fluent in the French language.³⁸ When Treaty Eight was signed in 1899, it included La Loche, but did not venture further into the Ile-a-la-Crosse district. This petition differs from earlier requests as it specifically requests scrip for the Metis. It is likely that Bishop Pascal and Father Rapet shaped the 1902 petition, and that their own understandings of what it meant to be Metis could have informed this request.³⁹ It is also probable that the petitioners were aware that scrip had been given to Metis at the nearby community of Green Lake, where several Ile-a-la-Crosse families had kinship ties.⁴⁰ Perhaps of most significance for this discussion is the list of names on the Metis petition, names such as Roy, Daigneault, Kyplain, Corrigan, Durocher, Bouvier, Dejarlais, Lariviere, Maurice and Aubichon. These are the names of some of the oldest Ile-a-la-Crosse fur-trading families, and many who today identify as Metis from Ile-a-la-Crosse who I interviewed for my project are the descendants of these signatories. All but two of those who signed the petition did so with an x mark indicating that they were not able to read the petition themselves. However, the tone of the petition, and earlier petitions, reads as the voices of those who signed. Only men signed the petition, so even if it was an accurate representation of the wishes of those men who identified as Metis in Ile-a-la-Crosse, it may not have represented their wives and mothers, many of whom were Dene or Cree women from other parts of the watershed.

Petitions for both treaty and scrip drew attention to loss, hardship, and destitution amongst the Indigenous people of the northwest. While asking for different processes, these

³⁷ Memorandum Clifford Sifton, 27 September 1902. “General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905,” RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

³⁸ To His Excellency the Governor General of Canada and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister, 1902. General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905,” RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

³⁹ Timothy Foran’s doctoral dissertation suggests that by 1902 the oblates had more of a racialized understanding of the Metis. Timothy Foran, “Les Gens De Cette Place.”

⁴⁰ Scrip was distributed at Green Lake in 1889 with the adhesion to Treaty Six, and again in 1900 with the Cote/McLeod commission. Following the allocation of scrip to the Metis of the Treaty Eight region in 1899, the federal government decided to deal similarly with the Metis in the organized territories and Manitoba who had yet to receive scrip. In 1900 J. A. Cote and Samuel McLeod were appointed as Half-Breed Commissioners to deal with the Saskatchewan District. See Martha McCarthy, “Thundering Waters Stilled: The Grand Rapids of the Saskatchewan,” *Manitoba History*, Number 15, (Spring 1988): http://Desjarlais.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_histor/Desjarlais/15/thunderingwatersstilled.shtml#36. For a discussion of shifting oblate usage regarding the term Metis in the Ile-a-la-Crosse territory, see Foran, “Les Gens De Cette Place.”

petitions shared the common goal of gaining relief from the federal government. During the treaty negotiations in 1906, concerns regarding destitution, and the desire to receive aid from the federal government were more apparent. Commissioner McKenna noted in his report that the Chief of the English River Band claimed: “all asked for assistance in seasons of distress; and it was strongly urged that the old and indigent who were no longer able to hunt and trap and were consequently often in destitute circumstances should be cared for by the government.”⁴¹ This supports my assertions regarding the power of the Church because of its role in the northwest as a provider of relief. In the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, disease, weather, and the dangers and unpredictability of the trapping economy, meant that social supports for the widowed, orphaned, elderly, and destitute were of increasing concern. As this would have been of cost to the Church and HBC, there was a desire from these institutions for the federal government to take responsibility.

Furthermore, the missionaries thought they would receive increased support from the federal government for their school. This is apparent both in missionary requests for support for the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, as well as in McKenna’s notes regarding the negotiations. Although much of his commentary generally applied to all of the bands he met with, his notes about arrears and education, specifically referred to issues raised by the English River Band. McKenna explained:

There was evidenced a marked desire to secure educational privileges for their children. In this connection and speaking for the Indians generally, the Chief of the English River Band insisted that in the carrying out of the government’s Indian educational policy among them, there should be no interference with the system of religious schools now conducted by the mission, but that public aid should be given for improvement and extension along the lines already followed.⁴²

In his report McKenna notes that he was careful not to make promises, just to reassure the people that the government would take responsibility for education. Other issues raised by the Indigenous people of the northwest related to hunting and that the treaty would not interfere with their mode of life. The adamant request for Catholic education suggests the significance of the Catholic Faith and its equation with a support for Catholic institutions for many belonging to the English River First Nation in 1906. This supports my contention of the sincerity of the Dene

⁴¹ J. A. McKenna, Commissioner, to The Hon Frank Oliver, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907.

⁴² Ibid.

people's Catholic faith in the region.⁴³ This faith could have reinforced the more political role of the priests in petitions and the treaty negotiations. In addition to Catholic faith, support for continuing the Church run residential school could have been motivated by the reality of the political economy of the region that involved families living in small settlements around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse and the Beaver and Churchill Rivers, as well as a reliance on the fur trade and fishing. In this way, the north was a significantly different context in 1906 than southern reserves during the late nineteenth century.⁴⁴ For the Church, this promise would mean increased federal funding for their educational institutions.⁴⁵

In addition to petitioning for treaty and scrip in the region, the Church determined whether Indigenous people in the region should be categorized as Chipewyan, Cree, or "Halfbreeds." Much of the government correspondence around making a treaty in the Ile-a-la-Crosse area was concerned with determining the numbers of each population so that they could ascertain the financial cost of making a treaty in the region and allocating scrip.⁴⁶ This correspondence also demonstrates the significance of race in government policy, and the difficulty that the government had in assessing the ambiguous relationship between those they would label as Indians and Metis at that time. This racially based distinction would prove to be significant, as those labeled Indians who took treaty would be placed under federal jurisdiction

⁴³ Elders Ovide and Irene Desjarlais in Ile-a-la-Crosse shared that earlier generations primarily sent their children to school to receive catechism and the sacraments before pulling them out of school, emphasizing the faith aspect that may have accompanied this request for schooling. Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 October 2012. For more information about Irene and Ovide and my work with them see Appendix A.

⁴⁴ Scholarship on treaty promises and education has tended to focus on the earlier numbered treaties in the prairies. For Treaty Ten, the differing geography and continuing economic reliance on trapping and fishing led leaders to request a boarding school, rather than an on-reserve day school. Nonetheless, requests for the continued support of a Church-run boarding school did not equal a request for inadequate conditions, denigration of Indigeneity, or abuse. In fact, it is clear in the request that Indigenous leaders thought that increased government support would improve conditions at the school. See for example, Sheila Carr-Stewart, "A Treaty Right to Education" *Canadian Journal of Education* vol. 26 (2) (2001): pp. 125-143.

⁴⁵ A boarding school opened in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1860, and in 1897 the federal government recognized that school as a residential school and provided more regular funding. In 1905 the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse closed and a new school was built at La Plonge that opened in 1906 and became known as Beavual Indian Residential School. Another residential school operated by the oblates reopened in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1912/1913. I provide a more detailed timeline of these events in chapter one.

⁴⁶ See for example To Mr. Watts from McKenna, April 1902 "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts)," 1883-1905, RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.; To Sir Wilfrid Laurier from McKenna, April 1902, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts)," 1883-1905, RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.; To T.O. Davis from McKenna, 21 October 1902, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts)," 1883-1905, RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC; Memorandum 18 March 1903, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts)," 1883-1905, RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

and those labeled as Halfbreeds and given scrip would technically be seen as the responsibility of the province and more likely fall through jurisdictional cracks.⁴⁷

The Catholic Church played a role in determining if individuals were categorized as Indians or Metis since it was the Catholic priests who provided numbers for the government. For example, in a letter to the Minister of the Department of the Interior, McKenna noted:

I have had an interview with Bishop Pascal, who has made trips through the country and knows it well. He is my informant as to the number of Halfbreeds and Indians. I think, however, that he has only reckoned people with part Cree and white blood as Halfbreeds, for I observe the census returns at Ile a la Crosse give only 275 Indians. But the Halfbreeds among the Chipweyans are more likely to class themselves as Indians than are the Crees who have white blood.⁴⁸

These statements by McKenna suggest that government attempts to fit the ambiguous identities of those they would class as Halfbreeds and Indians into racial categories proved difficult at this time, often because of intermarriage throughout the region, while emphasizing the government's continuing desire to achieve this goal. It also suggests that within Indigenous communities themselves there were various ideas about what constituted membership in different cultural communities. The more Indians who entered into treaty, the more liable the federal government would be to provide financial aid in the region.⁴⁹ This tension between a racialized policy, the ambiguity of identities on the ground, and an effort to commit as few resources as possible, was also reflected in the work of the Treaty Commission. In his report, McKenna suggests that individuals could choose whether to be treated as Indians or take scrip as Halfbreeds. This element of personal choice was especially significant as there was little that the government could do to determine who was an Indian and who was Metis. McKenna stated in his report on the 1906 commission that "It is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between those who classed themselves as Indians and those who elected to be treated with as half-breeds. Both dress alike and follow the same mode of life."⁵⁰ The records of the Treaty/Scrip Commission and the oral histories draw attention to the ambiguity involved in the process of differentiating who would be

⁴⁷ Those who took scrip continued to trap, hunt, and fish as they had before the treaty. It was not until the Natural Resources Transfer of 1930, when the province began enforcing regulations that gaming laws were enforced in the region.

⁴⁸ Memorandum for the Minister From the Department of the Interior Ottawa 18th March 1905, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

⁴⁹ J. R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy*, p. 27.

⁵⁰ J. A. McKenna, Commissioner, to The Hon Frank Oliver, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907.

classed as Indians under the Indian Act and under federal jurisdiction and who would be considered Metis, without Indian status and often caught between federal and provincial jurisdictions. These legal categories that cut across families would later impact the rights that were recognized, resources from the federal government, what residential school individuals attended, and most recently, if that residential school would be recognized in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

In his final report, McKenna acknowledges the influence and assistance of Bishop Pascal during the negotiations. Pascal is the only individual to be acknowledged by name for his assistance in the negotiations. McKenna wrote of the bishop's "influence on my first meeting the natives of the country, which is filled with reverence for his name because of his devoted labours."⁵¹ Here the archival record further supports and corroborates aspects of the oral histories – the Church played a significant role in the negotiations and that the prominence of the Church in the northwest was partially due to their labours, likely in providing relief and education in the region. In this way, the Church's political power grew out of its benevolence, and was likely further supported by the respect due to the priests' and bishop's spiritual roles in the community. The bishop especially, given his rank in the Church, would have been accorded with respect.⁵² McKenna further expanded on the role of the Church and bishop, the highest-ranking Church official in the region in 1906, and the relationship between the priests and nuns and their congregation. He described the mission as follows:

The building next in importance is the school conducted by the sisters. It shows marked evidence of age externally, but is cosy within, and the children whom I had the pleasure of meeting there, evidenced the kindly care and careful training of the devoted women who have gone out from the comforts of civilization to work for the betterment of the natives of the north. The priests' house is a small one. Its only door opens into a large room which occupies the greater part of the building and which is the common gathering place of the Indians and Halfbreeds who sit and smoke with an ease that seemed born of long habit of free intercourse with those who have undertaken the cure of their souls.⁵³

This is of course the view of the mission, the priests, and the nuns by an outsider who was only present for a short time. Yet, this account suggests simultaneous distance between and familiarity with, the missionaries and those they sought to "better." McKenna's description of physical

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See for example, Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁵³ J. A. McKenna, Commissioner, to The Hon Frank Oliver, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 18 January 1907.

spaces and the way Metis and First Nations people used those spaces hints at the somewhat ambiguous exercising of power (both spiritual and political) by members of the clergy as well as by members of the Indigenous community. Here McKenna's observations fit with oral accounts that noted the influential yet familiar roles and relationships of the priests and nuns in the region, and the respect that was accorded them. Missing in this account is any reference to concerns that some of the community members may have held at the time and that feature prominently in the current historical consciousness, or any suggestion of divisions amongst Indigenous parishioners regarding the Church, through either a female figure like Willow Heart, or male chiefs Apesis and Raphael.

Explaining local understandings of scrip, and motivations for picking scrip rather than treaty is apparent in oral histories and testimonies by the descendants of individuals who took scrip. In this way, the historical consciousness in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak relating to Treaty Ten differs. Additionally, the varying benefits associated with taking treaty and scrip resulted in status divisions that could cut across kinship relations, affect later events, and at times result in meaningful identities along status lines. Scrip buyers, or speculators, were visible during the Treaty Ten Commissions and were active in the region prior to the commissioners themselves.⁵⁴ The potential influence of speculators in convincing people to take scrip rather than treaty was considerable. For example, during the adhesion to Treaty Five, H. Halcrow claimed to have been responsible for the Halfbreeds applying for scrip instead of going into treaty with the Indians.⁵⁵ In a report submitted to the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources in 1939 regarding the "Indian and Half-breed Question," Father J. B. Ducharme referred to the allocation of scrip in the region as arbitrary, corrupt, and tainted by extortion. He emphasizes that a "rush of 'script' racketeers" followed the treaty party "exhorting the Indians to accept 'script' and afterwards extorting it from them at a vile price."⁵⁶ The Canadian Government was aware of scrip purchasing. Before leaving for his commission, Thomas Borthwick, who took over the commission in 1907 from McKenna, knew that certain speculators were preparing to purchase scrip from the Halfbreeds. He requested permission to exclude all persons from the process

⁵⁴ Frank Tough and Leah Dorion, "'The claims of the half-breeds...have finally been closed.'"

⁵⁵ Frank Tough, "Economic Aspects of Aboriginal Title in Northern Manitoba: Treaty 5 Adhesions and Métis Scrip," *Manitoba History* 15 (1988).

⁵⁶ Father J.B. Ducharme "Report on the Indian and Half-breed Question," As quoted in *The Dene Elders Project: Stories and History from the Westside*, volume 2, produced by Lynda Holland and Marry Ann Kkailther (La Ronge: Holland-Dalby Educational Consulting, 2003). p. 110.

except for applicants, witnesses, interpreters, clerks and himself.⁵⁷ Bishop Pascal, who originally petitioned the Canadian Government on behalf of the Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1902, and who McKenna acknowledged for his assistance and influence during the 1906 commission, worked with Revillon Freres agent Besnard to purchase scrip. Together they were able to obtain 94 claims out of the accepted 202 of Borthwick's commission in 1907.⁵⁸

The Church's involvement in purchasing scrip is apparent in the local historical consciousness of some community members, notably testimony by Brian Ratt from Ile-a-la-Crosse before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1992. Mr. Ratt connected his testimony to Metis self-government, and making sense of the treaty being signed in Ile-a-la-Crosse, which by the early 1990s was a predominantly Metis community. He stated,

People always ask me the same question, how come there is no reserve in Ile a la Crosse and yet the treaty was written here in this community. I say that the French and the church were here 150 years before the treaty commissioner arrived here so already there was a strong viable Métis community in existence even before the treaty commissioner came here. That's why I have always supported that the Métis people have a strong historical claim to and claims and self-government. At the same time when Treaty Ten was written out, it was written out on two basis: scrip for the Métis and treaty for the people of First Nations. Where the scrip went after that, I don't know but I think it all went to the church coffers, but our land is never for sale for anybody, the Church, the state.⁵⁹

The historical role of the Church and the French in the region is part of Ratt's definition of a historic, post-contact Metis community in the region that pre-dates the existence of Canada. However, the Church is also implicated with the state as an agent of colonialism that profited from scrip and Metis lands. Here there is some tension between the role of Catholicism in Metis (and I would argue Dene) cultures during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the role of the Church as a colonial agent.

As I argue in other chapters, recognizing the Catholic faith of Indigenous peoples in the region does not diminish or dismiss violence that was part of the colonial project. The Catholic faith of some community members (past and present) does not operate in a binary, and should not

⁵⁷ Borthiwick, 20 May 1907, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC.

⁵⁸ See Eastwood Jackson August 1st 1907, "General Housekeeping Records and Correspondence regarding Ile-a-la-Crosse Treaty (maps and charts), 1883-1905," RG10, vol. 4009, file 241-209-1, LAC; Tough and Dorion, "The claims of the half-breeds...have finally been closed."

⁵⁹ Mr. Brian Ratt, "Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 95: L.A.C. Community Hall, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan," (December 8th 1992) RCAP vol. 95 (Box 15), Native Law Centre Fonds, University of Saskatchewan Archives, pp. 262-263.

be used to dismiss the authenticity of Indigeneity or the seriousness of colonialism. Rather it is essential to understand the legitimate faith of some to interpret the nuances of how colonialism functioned in the region and the relationship between the spiritual and political power of the Church. In addition to the role of Catholicism in local Indigeneity, as well as the political and spiritual power of the Church, Mr. Ratt's testimony draws attention to more recent confusion around the treaty being written in Ile-a-la-Crosse, colloquially considered a non-treaty community, and his suggestion that scrip was a part of Treaty Ten.⁶⁰

Treaty Ten was first signed in Ile-a-la-Crosse, but today, members of the predominantly Metis community do not associate their community with its signing. With the exception of a small marker outside the municipal office, and a centennial celebration in 2006, Treaty Ten does not appear to be prominent within local historical consciousness. Those that I spoke with in Ile-a-la-Crosse did not have detailed stories of the Treaty/Scrip Commission, and tended to focus questions about the treaty to the issue of treaty status that is conflated with Indian status. Locally, the term "treaties" is used to refer to First Nations who have treaty and Indian status. Earlier interviews conducted with people from Ile-a-la-Crosse as well as testimony before the RCAP has focused on how individuals in 1906 may have understood the difference between taking treaty and scrip. The above noted ambiguity in picking treaty or scrip resulted in family members making different choices. Relatedly, the sexist provisions of the Indian Act regarding Indian status meant that until 1985 women with treaty status from neighboring First Nations lost their status when they married men whose ancestors took scrip. Like Mr. Ratt, others have suggested that scrip be seen as part of the larger treaty process, and that those who took scrip understood it as an economic choice that would not affect their rights or way of life. Alternatively, the influence of scrip buyers has also been proposed as a primary reason that some elected to take scrip. Given the documented need for relief, it would make sense that some would choose a greater one-time payment. The belief that taking scrip would not affect rights around hunting or fishing would have been supported by experience, as it was not until the Natural Resources Act of 1930 that transferred jurisdiction over crown lands and natural resources in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba to the provinces that hunting and fishing regulations began

⁶⁰ This discussion is continued in chapter eight that considers the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

to be enforced in the region.⁶¹ Prior to the transfer most individuals continued to live as they had prior to 1906 with little interference by provincial or federal governments. Since 1930 the consequences have been profound for those whose ancestors took scrip, as the Metis people have had to pursue hunting rights in court and were left out of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.⁶²

In addition to deciding between treaty and scrip on the basis of advice and pressure from others, individuals' understandings of what scrip and treaty meant also affected decisions. The late Gilbert McCallum, known as Sarge, whom I met in 2006 in Ile-a-la-Crosse suggested in an earlier interview with the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) that his ancestors did not understand what scrip was.⁶³ I infer from this that Indigenous people understood scrip and the promises that were made differently than the Canadian Government.⁶⁴ The public meetings with Commissioner McKenna in Ile-a-la-Crosse, where he orally answered questions and emphasized that the government would not interfere with things like hunting and fishing, were attended by those who took treaty as well as by those that chose scrip. Accounts of the negotiations, most notably by Elder Ross Cummings to lawyer and politician Clément Chartier, support the notion that those who took scrip did not believe that their way of life would be changed by accepting scrip.⁶⁵ There is no record in the report of how scrip was explained to those gathered, and based on oral recountings of the commission it is unlikely that an official explanation included what an individual would be expected to give-up. Politician and educator Max Morin, who I interviewed once, explained that those who took scrip did so because they thought it would help to maintain their traditional ways of life and connections to territory. He clarified, "when the commissioner came he told them if you want to live in a reserve you go here. If you want to continue where you're living and hunting and trapping where you're hunting and trapping come in this line. So the Metis went in that line because they want to continue going back to their own traditional territory."⁶⁶ Max's historical consciousness of why his ancestors chose to take scrip is that the

⁶¹ The Natural Resources Act of 1930 transferred control over natural resources from the federal to provincial government. The provincial government became more active in enforcing regulations in the north.

⁶² Gilbert McCallum, The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, www.metismuseum.ca.

⁶³ I interviewed Gilbert McCallum, or Sarge, in 2006.

⁶⁴ Gilbert McCallum, The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, www.metismuseum.ca.

⁶⁵ "Métis Nation Land and Resources," in Royal Commission on Aboriginal People [RCAP], v. 4 Perspectives and Realities (Ottawa: RCAP, 1996), p. 336, 337.

⁶⁶ Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014.

Metis were opposed to the potential limits of living on reserves and separation from traditional territory, emphasizing the significance of that traditional territory to the Metis.

Ross Cummings was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse on March 15th 1889. In 1906 he attended the signing of Treaty Ten there, and when asked if he would take treaty or scrip he chose the latter.⁶⁷ In response to a question regarding Métis understandings of the rights to hunt, fish, and trap that they lost by taking scrip, Mr. Cummings responded:

The Big Boss (the scrip commissioner) said I won't tell you guys what to do as long as the sun moves. I won't tell you what to do. I'll look after you. We'll look after you. That's what I heard him say. There were a lot of people outside that heard him say that too. You'll be given money and the Money Man will give you money to use. If you are given money, the Money Man will give you equipment to use. As long as the sun is moving they will always look after you. That's when they took the land and they took the money. The treaties first and then the half-breeds. That's when I became a non-treaty and took scrip.⁶⁸

According to Mr. Cummings, "nobody was told anything [different] until maybe twenty years later and then they started telling us. Then we had to pay for everything."⁶⁹

These statements corroborate the idea that Metis people understood McKenna's promises made during the treaty negotiations to apply to everyone gathered equally, regardless of who selected treaty or scrip. According to Mr. Cummings, individuals made what was essentially an economic choice between a single larger payment or multiple smaller payments without knowing the differing ways they would subsequently be classed by the government or the impact of their choice on rights. Yet, even in his recounting, one can infer how this choice came to affect his identity, when he became a "non-treaty." Differing legal status, which became more pronounced realities for individuals that took scrip since the 1930s, are apparent in local historical consciousness. In his memoirs, Chief Ralph Paul draws attention to the divisiveness of the treaty in splitting families including godparents. In this context certain Catholic sacraments brought people together, while treaty status separated them. Chief Paul writes, "This treaty, like all other treaties, was very divisive. It split families, created animosities, and divided the Dene into treaty and non-treaty people. Our Metis relatives could not live on this measured out land. They had to

⁶⁷ "Ross Cummings," In *The Dene Elders Project: Stories and History From the Westside*, p. 74.

⁶⁸ Ross Cummings, Interview with Clément Chartier, July 1976 Métis Nation of Saskatchewan Archive as quoted in "Métis Nation Land and Resources." p 337.

⁶⁹ Ibid. For similar statements by Elders on Métis rights to hunt and fish see Marie Rose McCallum and Robbie Fontaine as quoted in "Métis Nation Land and Resources." p. 338

live outside the reserve. My godparents Joe and Mary Ann Kyplain was one such family.”⁷⁰ Legal status therefore cannot be factored out of scholarly discussions of how people in the region understand themselves.⁷¹

Despite the ambiguity associated with who took treaty and who took scrip, within communities there is a tendency to equate “Metisness” with taking scrip, and to refer to those with treaty status as “Treaties.” Legal status cannot be equated with cultural identity, but it has limited where people can live and some movement between communities in the region. Kinship has continued to cut across status boundaries, and been affected by both the changing status of women and resulting separation from their reserves.⁷² Women from English River and other reserves who married Metis men lost their status. As a result, if one looks at the maternal kinship connections, Ile-a-la-Crosse is a community with kinship connections across the region.⁷³ In Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse, community members tend to equate treaty status and the absence of treaty status with being Dene or Metis. When speaking of treaties and status, those I spoke with tended to obscure kinship connections that were more apparent during other parts of the interviews. There was a tendency for some to identify as Metis because they have familial connections to old fur trade families, their ancestors took scrip, and they do not have treaty status. In contrast those who identified as Dene in English River, also had kinship connections to old fur trade families (such as McIntyre, Lariviere, and Maurice), but their ancestors took treaty, and they currently have treaty status. When I asked Jacob Estralshenan “And then some people in Ile-a-la-Crosse took scrip instead of treaty?” he responded, “yep, yeah, yeah they took scrip, that’s how they got to be Metis.”⁷⁴ Jacob’s explanation suggests that in some current historical

⁷⁰ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 28.

⁷¹ The complexity and at times arbitrariness of status and continued kinship connections draw attention to the need for more studies that cross status lines, and discussions of “Metisness” that incorporate this complexity. Both J.R. Miller and Chris Andersen have called for studies that cross status lines. However, my work also indicates the need to consider how the allotment of status has shaped personal and community identities over the past century. Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), pp.18, 204-207; J .R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” in *Reflections of Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 551-52.

⁷² A broader study that considers the entire watershed is needed to more fully appreciate the movement of women through the region through marriage, how gaining and or losing status has affected their identities, as well as how women’s identities and historical consciousness compares to that of their children.

⁷³ When I first began my work in English River, the benefits of a broader study that considered the entire watershed (from Pinehouse to La Loche) were shared with me, especially given the extensive kinship connections throughout the region. A region-wide study was beyond the scope of the time or resources allotted for this dissertation. My focus on two communities has raised questions that a regional/watershed study would be better situated to answer.

⁷⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

consciousness it was taking scrip that created Metis people and communities in northwestern Saskatchewan. Similar sentiments of connection and division were echoed by Duane Favel, the Mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse who explained, “we’re basically the same people, separated by treaty I guess in terms of a lot of people in the northwest side were you Treaty or Metis, we’re all interrelated. I’m related to probably a quarter of Dillon, which is a reserve. My dad’s sister married in and all of my first cousins are Treaty.”⁷⁵

Max Morin emphasized how status has divided the northwest in his testimony before the RCAP explaining:

In northern Saskatchewan and particularly in our community the Indian and Métis people have lived together. We have hunted fished and trapped together. We didn’t define each other of that’s an Indian and that’s a Métis until the federal government came and decided to put a number on some of our people and said you are treaty now and the ones that are not treaty are now Métis...⁷⁶

Connections between communities have been maintained through women who lost status or gained status when they married their husbands. In spite of divisions along status lines, kinship, the Catholic faith, lifestyle, and a shared history has continued to connect people throughout the region. With Bill C-31 and Bill C-3, several individuals who identify as Metis in Ile-a-la-Crosse have been able to regain treaty status through their mothers or grandmothers. Many of these individuals continue to emphasize their Metis identity, explaining that they are Metis at heart, even if legally they can only have one status.⁷⁷ As a result their historical consciousness may be Metis, even if legally they have regained Indian status and are members of neighbouring First Nations.

The full impact of status-based identities on families and communities has not been explored, and properly doing so would require a more detailed study of the watershed (from Patuanak to La Loche), rather than a focus on two communities. Legal definitions of Indian and Metis were both imposed and selected in northwestern Saskatchewan through individual choice, government policy, misunderstandings, and the influences of speculators, the Roman Catholic Church, and the HBC. Even though the federal government struggled to place its own race-based definitions onto the people of the north, their policies continued to be shaped by the idea of two

⁷⁵ Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

⁷⁶ Mr. Max Morin, Presentation on Historical Perspective, “Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 95: L.A.C. Community Hall, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan,” p. 3.

⁷⁷ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes. Some individuals in Ile-a-la-Crosse who were able to regain status through Bill C-3, still consider themselves to be “Metis at heart,” even though legally they can only have one identity apparent in the decision of *Alberta v. Cunningham* (2011).

racially distinct and separate people. Treaties are a significant component of the current national narrative of relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers – both in the historical scholarship as well as in the broader national historical consciousness. In Saskatchewan, this is evident in the work of the OTC and their familiar slogan that “we are all treaty people.”⁷⁸ Looking at the story of Willow Heart, as well as the experiences of those whose families took scrip, complicates this celebratory narrative. Nonetheless, for others in the northwest, national narratives associated with being Metis, such as stories of Riel, or with having an ancestor who signed Treaty Ten, are significant components of their historical consciousness.

The entangled political, benevolent, spiritual, and violent aspects of the Church’s history in the northwest have resulted in shifting and various local historical consciousness, and understandings of what it means to be Indigenous and Catholic. Personal experiences and university education for some individuals challenge local stories where Catholicism is central. National narratives and icons increasingly have meaning for local people both to draw attention to the strengths of their leaders and communities, but also to explain and make sense of historic and contemporary exclusions. Within communities and between northern communities there are variations in local historical consciousness, notably with the exclusion of Willow Heart from the majority of stories shared about the Treaty Commission. This could be due to the fact that the chief and headmen ultimately sided with Father Rapet, rather than Willow Heart, suggesting differences, historically and today, within the English River community. Nonetheless, these stories also contain points of commonality, notably the roles of the priests in the decision of community members to agree to sign Treaty Ten. Beyond accounts noting the roles of Father Rapet and other clergy in the treaty negotiations, oral histories tended to focus on the impact of taking treaty or scrip on legal status, and considering why various ancestors and community members made the decisions that they did. Government policies were clearly racialized regarding Indian status, but on the ground, extensive kinship connections throughout the region made the process of imposing and selecting treaty or scrip more ambiguous. Differing legal status, most apparent after the Natural Resources Transfer Act in 1930, has caused divisions within the region, while kinship has continued to cut across these barriers. Until revisions to the Indian Act in 1985 and more recently in 2010, this resulted in Cree and Dene women losing their status when they married non-status men.

⁷⁸ Office of the Treaty Commission, accessed 10 February 2017, <http://www.otc.ca>.

While recognizing the artificial split between “Treaty” and Metis people, some identify with national narratives of treaties and the Metis Nation (centered around Red River and Riel). In this way, there is a separation in regional historical consciousness along status and generational lines. Those I spoke with in Ile-a-la-Crosse were generally aware of local events in 1885, but their stories of 1906 tended to focus on how scrip was understood by Metis ancestors, as well as current understandings of differences between Treaties (those with status), and the Metis (without status), as well as acknowledgements of kinship ties.

Willow Heart is not the sole focus of local retellings of 1906. As a result, I have also looked at the shifting roles of the priests, and their political power during the 1906 negotiations as well as the artificial barrier created by legal status associated with taking treaty and scrip. National identities in part associated with legal status at times sit in tension with local histories, but can be meaningful to some in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak today. It was necessary to devote attention to the role of the Church as a provider of relief in the region, as well as a liaison with the federal government, to establish that the Church often acted, or was perceived to have acted, as a colonial agent in the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The implications of this colonial role of the Church and its perceived relationships with the federal government will be central to later chapters. Even though the Church was often benevolent it was nonetheless paternalistic in the way it provided and managed a sort of social welfare. By 1906 its power was visibly greater than just twenty years earlier, apparent in the Willow Heart stories, and the corresponding oral histories that noted the role of Father Rapet in the decision of the English River First Nation to sign Treaty Ten.

Church officials played a significant role in determining who would take treaty and who would take scrip, as evident in the petitions and correspondence by priests, in effect contributing to the erection of new identity boundaries in the region. Historian Tim Foran has observed how oblate understandings of “Metis” shifted in the region after 1885.⁷⁹ It is unclear in the 1902 petition for scrip the varying roles of Church officials and community members in deciding to request scrip, though as Foran suggests in his work, by 1902, the oblates had a more definite sense of Metis as a distinct and racialized group. The financial interests of scrip buyers like Bishop Pascal may have further shaped why some were encouraged to take scrip. All of this is of course complicated by the individual choice that was made between treaty and scrip, and how the

⁷⁹ Foran, “Les Gens De Cette Place.”

individuals who made those decisions understood the difference between the two, as well as potential pressure from scrip buyers.

The political power of Church officials in these negotiations played out within the context of the sincere Catholic faith of many in the region in 1906, though the currently circulating stories about Willow Heart complicate understandings of what it may have meant to be a Catholic Dene woman in 1906. More recently, Elders I have worked with, like Jacob Estralshenan, who maintain a strong Catholic faith while critiquing the Church for its hypocrisy, challenge the binaries between Indigenous and Catholic that are apparent in the historical consciousness of some younger members of their community. In the following chapters, how Catholicism and Indigeneity is negotiated will continue to vary according to family, gender, socio-economic status, generation, life history, and education. There is also a continuing tendency for individual and community relationships with Catholicism to be more complex than more recent historical consciousness might suggest. While there is an apparent trend of predominantly Catholic communities shifting to historically Catholic communities where some people reject the Church, Catholic faith continues, as does resistance to the more authoritarian and colonial aspects of the institution of the Church. The benevolent colonialism and perceived association between the Church and federal government will lay the foundations for violence, abuse, and neglect at the residential schools in Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse. But first, we turn to a discussion of Father Louis Moraud, an oblate missionary in Patuanak who by the time of his passing in 1965 was seen as a local saint. In effect, in just over half a century after Willow Heart's predictions it was a male, Catholic priest who was celebrated in the region as spiritually powerful with the ability to predict the future and perform miracles.

Remembering and Forgetting Father Moraud: Negotiating Catholicism, 1916-1965

“He used to have this big scroll that showed the good road that led to heaven and the bad road that led to hell. We used to be amazed by his teachings. The Elders today have a strong faith because of the teachings from Father Moraud.”¹

-Jonas Aubichon

“No one liked him when living, now dead, kneel by his grave. If he was alive he’d be martyred for sure.”²

-Frank McIntyre

“To me he was a rare Catholic, separate from what I got to know afterwards.”³

-Bernie Eaglechild

By the middle of the twentieth century it was no longer a Dene woman respected for her spiritual power who was the principal interlocutor between Dene people and the larger Roman Catholic community, but rather an oblate priest, Father Louis Moraud (January 6th 1888- July 30th 1965), the resident priest in Patuanak, or Chagona, and surrounding missions along the Churchill River. Moraud served in this position from 1916 until his death in 1965. Originally from a well-off Quebec family, and the brother of senator Lucien Moraud, Father Moraud was a missionary priest who was more like a character out of the nineteenth century than the mid-twentieth.⁴ He wore his beard long with the black cassock of his order, and had a reputation for being strict. Catechism was taught with his scroll, the nineteenth century oblate teaching tool known as the “Catholic Ladder,” where he showed Dene and Metis children the two paths: the path to heaven and the path to hell, with no in-between. Moraud was criticized by his superiors for grounding his teachings in fear rather than love, and local people remember that during Moraud’s time, sins such as gambling, dancing, or pregnancy out of wedlock were punished by public shaming and

¹ “Jonas Aubichon,” *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p. 96. I did not personally interview Jonas, but met him when I interviewed his wife Caroline Aubichon. Jonas was raised by his grandmother Josette Maurice.

² June 15th 1979, Site 1, Frank McIntyre Addendum. Robert Jarvenpa, “Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory” (1979) VI-D-38M R, Canadian Museum of History Archives. For more information about Frank, see Appendix A.

³ Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014. For more information about Bernie, see Appendix A.

⁴ For example, in one of the few published accounts of Father Moraud, environmentalist and paddler Sigurd Olson (1899-1982) describes the priest in his 1961 book *The Lonely Land* as, “the epitome of all the men of God who had braved the wilderness since the days of early exploration. A small man, hard and wiry and weather-beaten, he stood in the bow of his big canoe, a symbol of the North and the Church.” Olson begins his chapter on Father Moraud by quoting advice that Father Gabriel gave to Father Hennepin in 1678, and makes comparisons between Moraud and Hennepin in his chapter. See Sigurd F. Olson, *The Lonely Land* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997: First Published in 1961), p. 87.

not being allowed to take communion in church.⁵ Patuanak was itself a satellite mission to the oblate mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and from Patuanak Moraud travelled by boat, dogsled, and plane to the varying communities he served along the Churchill River, hitching rides with community members or the visiting Indian Agent.⁶ Father Moraud advocated against the construction of a road to Patuanak and other developments such as a fish plant, encouraging his parishioners to live off the land, speak their Indigenous languages, and stay in the satellite communities of Cree Lake, Primeau, Knee Lake, and Dipper Lake. In addition to his strictness, community members remember Moraud for speaking Dene, performing miracles, and predicting the future. After his death in 1965, his body was held in state in Ile-a-la-Crosse before it was escorted back to Patuanak by black sailed canoes and boats. His burial in Patuanak marked the first of what would become an annual Father Moraud pilgrimage that continues to take place today, and is attended by Indigenous peoples throughout the region and from as far north as Black Lake and Wollaston. To many Elders in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse today, Father Moraud is a saint.⁷

Indigenous people in the northwest decided Moraud's saintly status. They continue to turn to him for guidance, protection, and healing today. In effect, Saint Louis Moraud is a means for local Indigenous people to address the legacy and ongoing colonialism in the region, even though Father Moraud as an authoritarian missionary priest was part of the colonial project. In the following chapters, I consider stories of Father Moraud in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, as well as letters by Moraud and community members, to explore the complicated relations between local belief in Moraud as a missionary saint and the role of Moraud in northern colonialism, contributing to my argument that the spiritual power of the priests and the Church reinforced

⁵ See for example, Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Undated, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives; Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul.

⁶ See for example, Louis Moraud, Circular, From Ile-a-la-Crosse, 22 January 1965, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives; Louis Moraud, Circular, From Patuanak, September 13 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁷ I use the term "is a saint" here purposefully, as Elders have corrected me when I mentioned I heard Moraud was considered a saint. Because the focus of this dissertation is on local understandings of Catholicism, I have elected to use the term saint as those I worked with use it. Within the Catholic Church terms like saint and miracles have specific definitions and require official recognition. The Indigenous people I have worked with do not need that recognition to identify Moraud as a saint and his work as miracles. Some younger individuals have mentioned Moraud's miracles being investigated by the Church, but this was not the focus of my conversations with Elders or the stories that were shared with me. See for example, Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D'Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013; Agnes Gardiner, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse Saskatchewan, 19 June 2014; Mary Lariviere, Interview with Amanda Fehr, translated by Patrick D'Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013.

their political power. I am also interested in what the history of Moraud and his teachings reveal about the practice of Roman Catholicism in the northwest during the mid-twentieth century, as well as how local belief in the sainthood of Moraud continues to inform Catholicism in the region and shape historical consciousness. Understanding the Catholicism that has been historically practiced within northwestern communities further situates discussions in other chapters about the Catholic faith of community members, and contextualizes local tensions between generations around believing or not believing stories about abuse taking place in residential schools.⁸ In other words, signifying the varying and shifting ways that Indigenous people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse have understood what it means to be Catholic and belong to Catholic communities.

The archival record contrasts with local historical consciousness, more clearly demonstrating Moraud's colonial and authoritarian role in the region as well as local efforts to have him replaced by a different priest because of concerns that he was not meeting the needs of local Catholics. Moraud's own correspondence reveals that he was, and that he regarded himself as being a participant in the Church's control over economic development in the region. He was at best paternalistic towards his parishioners. A series of letters written between 1940 and 1958 to Bishop Lajeunesse and Bishop Dumouchel by community members from Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak provide the strongest critiques of Moraud, focusing on his prejudice and failures in his duties as a Catholic priest. The fact that Moraud was critiqued during his life because people felt that their Catholic needs were not being taken care of, emphasizes that this was a historically Catholic community and challenges more recent depictions of earlier generations as deferent and unquestioning of Catholic authorities.⁹

During my interviews it was difficult to find people who were willing to critique Moraud. Rather, Moraud's strictness was suggested; especially in less formal contexts, and I asked questions about his strictness during interviews. Those I spoke with in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak tended to make more vague criticisms of the Church, rather than Moraud himself. Only in earlier field notes, and one unpublished memoir, was I able to find more blatant critiques of Moraud since his death. Even then, there remains a tendency to direct the strongest critiques more generally at the Church. I interpret this as a result of local historical consciousness around Moraud's sainthood that does not comfortably fit with the historical realities of Moraud's role as

⁸ In particular see chapters two, five, six, and eight.

⁹ See for example, Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

a mission priest in the mid-twentieth century, or local efforts to have him replaced. This disconnect could relate to generational changes as well as the fact that Patuanak as a single settlement is relatively new and includes families who during Moraud's time lived in other communities along the Churchill River and as far north as Cree Lake. Current narratives are further combined with nostalgia for a time of strong Catholic faith that leads those who took catechism with Moraud to idealize Moraud's strictness in more recent retellings.

Father Moraud is the only local saint in Patuanak and surrounding areas, but he is not the first prophet or individual with significant spiritual power to have resided within the region.¹⁰ There is a deep history of prophets, including Willow Heart (discussed in chapter two), and of Medicine men like Crowhead (discussed in the introductory chapter) who were known for their immense powers. In this way, Moraud's miracles are not unique in the broader spiritual history of Patuanak or the northwest region. Some significant changes were taking place, evident in the treatment of Willow Heart at the treaty negotiations in 1906, and in the 1940s when the first chief's wife, Mary Apesis, was committed to the hospital in North Battleford for what some community members now believe was an ability to predict the future.¹¹ The shift in prophets, from Dene women to a non-Indigenous male priest, is a significant gendered change. By the mid-twentieth century, there was no longer room for a Dene woman to be a prophet in the northwest, but a male oblate priest, who was not Dene, could be labeled as a saint for performing miracles. Elder Jacob Estralshenan noted the unwillingness of the priests to accept Dene stories.¹² Within this context, seeing Moraud, in part, as a continuation of a broader Dene tradition of recognizing spiritual power and being open to a range of beliefs is an act of local spiritual agency amidst increasing restrictions.

¹⁰ While Moraud the saint could be contextualized within a scholarship on Indigenous prophet and revitalization movements, I interpret him primarily as a missionary saint, given the blatant colonial and authoritarian aspects of his history in Patuanak. In many ways, Moraud has more in common with Father Rapet than with Willow Heart. It should also be noted that while I see Moraud's miracles within a broader context of local prophets and spiritually powerful figures, those I have interviewed have not explicitly made those connections. Moraud is discussed as a saint performing miracles, contrasting with Willow Heart who is either contextualized within a Dene context or through comparisons to Nostradamus. For scholarly discussions of revitalization movements Homer Barnett, *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*. (New York: Knopf, 1970). Both Barnett and Wallace see prophet movements as responses to cultural crisis or trauma and social disorder and do not seem to take the spiritual/religious elements of these "cults" seriously.

¹¹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 29. Chief Paul notes that he learned this story from Elders in Patuanak and his godmother Mary Ann Kyplain.

¹² Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013. See my more detailed discussion in the introduction and chapter two.

In addition to a deep history of prophets and spiritually powerful individuals, the type of Catholicism practiced in the region included an emphasis on both female and male saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Moraud's strictness and the length of time spent in the region were similar to other missionary priests during the early and mid-twentieth century, such as Father Rapet and Father Rossignol in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Moraud differs in local historical consciousness from these individuals because of his ability to perform miracles, making him arguably the most powerful of the group.

This section is comprised of two chapters. Chapter four considers Father Moraud the priest including his approach to catechism, his positionality in the region as an insider and an outsider, as well as local resistance apparent in efforts to have him replaced, and concludes with a discussion of his death. Chapter five discusses Father Moraud the saint, by exploring the stories of his miracles and the pilgrimage in his name before looking at some of the trends and variations in how Moraud is understood in local historical consciousness. The rest of this introductory section includes a brief discussion of the relevant historiography and specific methodological concerns unique to these chapters on Father Moraud. My separation of Moraud the priest from his miracles and local memories is an effort to draw attention to the various components of Father Moraud. Community members typically do not separate the man from the saint in their retellings.

Stories of Father Moraud are more prevalent in Patuanak but are also well known in Ile-a-la-Crosse and have broader regional significance in northwestern Saskatchewan, likely due to fifty years of pilgrimages following his death. Unlike the Willow Heart stories discussed in the previous chapters, historical consciousness relating to Moraud's saintliness is more widely shared throughout the region and seems to cut across status, community, and cultural differences to bring people of the north together. It also serves as a reminder that it was not until the late 1960s, and early 1970s that the majority of people in the region relocated to permanently reside in communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. Until that time, families in the region lived in smaller settlements around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse, along the Beaver and Churchill Rivers, and as far North as Cree Lake. As a result, Elders who currently live in Ile-a-la-Crosse may have grown up closer to Patuanak, taking catechism there with Father Moraud. Father Moraud is a significant figure for both communities, but because he was the resident priest in Patuanak and satellite communities like Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, Primeau Lake, and Cree Lake he is more closely

associated with Patuanak where he is buried and where since the early 1970s families from the Churchill River satellite communities have made their homes.

Older community members tend to clarify if they are from Patuanak, Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, or Primeau Lake when asked where they are from. Although narratives of Moraud's sainthood tend to more generally focus on Patuanak, Patuanak as a single community did not exist until after Moraud's death. The geographical differences of where people lived and how they were connected between Moraud's life and today is significant as current historical consciousness tends to focus on more recent iterations of community. In this way Moraud is seen as Patuanak's saint, rather than the saint of Dipper Lake and Primeau Lake who reluctantly served Patuanak, and local historical consciousness serves to connect previously separate communities even though during his life Moraud's efforts to serve all of these communities proved to be fragmenting.

More so than stories of events and individuals discussed in other chapters, recountings of Father Moraud are common at the local level, but absent from national historical consciousness and historical scholarship. These stories complicate a broader historiography that has recognized the role of the Catholic Church in the colonial project, especially in the provincial north, but not discussed the Catholic faith of Indigenous people in the region, an aspect that I argue is necessary to understand how colonialism worked. Scholarship by historian David Quiring about the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and colonialism in the north recognizes the political power of non-Indigenous people in the region during the mid twentieth century, but does not discuss the sincere Catholicism of Indigenous people. Figures like Father Moraud who loom large in local Indigenous retellings of their history are only mentioned in passing in Quiring's scholarship.¹³ Quiring's narrative neither acknowledges the continuing power of the Church during the CCF years, nor the faith and agency of Dene and Metis people in the north apparent in both efforts to replace Moraud and to praise him as a saint.

Alternatively, scholarship by anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa on the Father Moraud pilgrimage is missing detailed discussions of Moraud's life and the broader political context of the Catholic Church in northern Saskatchewan during the mid-twentieth century. Jarvenpa has published two articles about the Father Moraud pilgrimage, one in 1990 and the other in 2008,

¹³ David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

though both of these publications were based on his research in Patuanak during the 1970s.¹⁴ His work is based more specifically on observations of the Moraud pilgrimage at that time, rather than broader interviews about Moraud, the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith. Jarvenpa makes a couple of observations in passing, that are more deeply explored here – in particular he notes the tension between the colonial role of the Church and the local agency in declaring Moraud a saint, as well as how memories of Moraud’s were affected by his saintly status. Jarvenpa explains,

As a priest, Moraud was widely admired by his fellow clergy and his congregation for his single-minded devotion to ecclesiastical work and for his ascetic life. However his vigilant suppression of native magico-religious practices, coupled with a vigorous monitoring of Christian vices such as gambling and drinking alienated some parishioners. The conflict was most profoundly felt in the negative sanction he applied to traditional rituals of respect for slain animals... After Moraud’s death, these negative feelings were largely overshadowed by reverential feelings and the development of a lore that romanticizes the priest’s life of hardships, mishaps, and alleged “miraculous” powers.¹⁵

Jarvenpa’s scholarship focuses on the hybridity of the phenomena of Indigenous pilgrimages, contributing to academic debates about their meanings within the discipline of anthropology, but does not take local faith in Moraud seriously. The following chapters take up Jarvenpa’s observation of the impact of Moraud’s death on local memory and more deeply considers the roles of Moraud in the region during his life, and how historical understandings of Moraud have changed over time. I consider both the colonial aspects of Moraud’s priesthood, as well as the sincere faith of those for whom he is a saint. My research also reveals that during his life Moraud was not simply critiqued for colonial aspects like banning traditional Dene practices, but for not fulfilling his duties as a Catholic priest. In this way, local critiques during his life were those of a Catholic community advocating to have their priest replaced with someone who would be more attentive to their needs rather than a community trying to have a colonial agent removed. Additionally, my interviews about Moraud, occurring almost fifty years after his passing offer glimpses at more recent historical consciousness about Moraud in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

¹⁴ Robert Jarvenpa, “The Development of Pilgrimage in an inter-cultural frontier,” in *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition* (New York: University Press of America, 1990); Miguel Astor-Aguilera and Robert Jarvenpa, “Comparing Indigenous Pilgrimages: Devotion, Identity, and Resistance in Mesoamerica and North America,” *Anthropos*, Vol. 103. 2. (2008), pp. 482-506.

¹⁵ Astor-Aguilera and Jarvenpa, “Comparing Indigenous Pilgrimages,” p. 493.

Detailed histories of Moraud and the pilgrimage in his name are also absent from local and academic Catholic histories of the mission and western Canada.¹⁶

The following chapters are based on interviews that I conducted with Elders and community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak about Father Moraud. This was the component of my doctoral research that Elders seemed the most eager to discuss. Some community members shared memories of catechism with Moraud as children; fewer knew him during their adult lives, while others were quite young when he passed, but familiar with stories about him and the annual pilgrimage. I was unable to interview any of the men who worked closely with him, but did speak with women like Grandma Bébé Sarazine Ratt who did household work for Moraud. Moraud told Grandma Ratt that she would have a very long life, and when I met with her she was 103.¹⁷

Because of the sincere belief in Father Moraud's sainthood, I have struggled to craft an argument that is true to the stories that were shared with me, but that does not inadvertently create a celebratory narrative downplaying colonizing factors. At the same time, while I argue it is important to consider Moraud's role as a colonial agent, my goal is not to take the ironic tone of the historian dismissing or discrediting local agency and meaning found in Moraud. Similarly some of the archival sources that I have found suggest a more conflicted relationship between Father Moraud and some community members during the 1950s that is missing in local historical consciousness. As in other chapters, I try to distinguish the community voices that I am using as evidence from my own interpretations. In addition to my interviews, I was able to attend parts of the Father Moraud pilgrimage in 2013, observe images of Moraud in community members' homes, and find references to him in less formal settings. It was in these settings that I both

¹⁶ Moraud is not included in more general academic discussions of Catholicism in the region. Brenda Macdougall recognizes the significance of the Catholic Church in her study of the Metis at Ile-a-la-Crosse. Her work situates the Church within concepts of *wahkootawin* and does not include events in the twentieth century, or the increasingly colonial role of the Church. Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). Other scholarship relating to the region similarly focuses on earlier periods or official Church narratives that do not focus on individual priests or local Indigenous beliefs that they are saints. See for example Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 1995); Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Metis: The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Western Canada, 1845-1945* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996). Moraud is also largely absent from the publication to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse, where the only reference to him was that he was the first missionary in the region to fly in a plane. See "The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years," Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/rcindex.html>.

¹⁷ Grandma Ratt passed away on September 8th 2016. The last time I saw her was in 2014. For a more detailed discussion about Grandma Ratt and my work with her see Appendix A.

observed Elders encouraging younger family members to pray to Moraud, and heard whispers of more critical stories of the local saint.

As in earlier chapters I have consulted the field notes of anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa. He worked with male trappers in Patuanak for his own doctoral work during the early 1970s, and returned to the community in 1975 and 1979. His field notes include his own observations of the Moraud pilgrimage in 1975, as well as those of his wife and co-researcher, ethnoarchaeologist Hetty Jo Brumbach. Working in the community ten and fifteen years after Moraud's passing, Jarvenpa includes some more critical community statements about the priest in his field notes than I have been able to find or record. The stronger critiques available in Jarvenpa's notes are supported by observations I have made during my own fieldwork, as well as former Chief Ralph Paul's unpublished manuscript of his life history and time at Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS).¹⁸ In 1944 when he was six, Chief Paul was sent to BIRS. Throughout the memoir, he critiques Moraud in ways that challenge the historical consciousness more apparent within the region. Moraud's own writing supports Chief Paul's critiques of his strictness, doctrine focusing on fear, and judgment of parishioners.

A comprehensive analysis of archival material relating to Moraud is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I have focused on Father Moraud's depiction of himself and his mission found in his circular letters that he sent out to supporters informing them of his works and asking for donations to support his mission. In particular, I reference a body of circulars sent in English to Dr. and Mrs. McGill between 1950 and 1965 that often included a handwritten note at the bottom. English was not Moraud's first language, and as a result, the circulars require some interpretation. For example I interpret "creasy" to mean crazy, and leasy to mean "lazy." The tone of the letters is quite abrupt, and he often shifts from discussing tragedy and deaths to more detailed discussions of his canning, bread making, travels, and visitors. I have also consulted a set of letters written to Bishops Lajeunesse and Dumouchel between 1940 and 1958 by community members expressing concerns about Moraud and asking for a new priest at Patuanak.

¹⁸ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

Chapter 4

Father Louis Moraud entered the oblates novitiate at Ville La Salle Quebec August 4th 1909, was ordained a priest in 1914 and arrived in the Vicariate of Keewatin in July 1915. He served in Patuanak from 1916 until his death in 1965, permanently establishing his residence there in 1937 and building the community's first church. Father Moraud would later build churches at Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, Primeau Lake, and as far north as Cree Lake.¹ He was connected to the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse, but also separate from it—physically and in terms of how he is remembered. Travel by dog team, boat, aircraft, and road, was part of his life, whether it was to serve parishioners along the Churchill or as far north as Cree Lake. He also made visits to the mission at Ile-a-la-Crosse, to the Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) for annual retreats, and occasionally returned to Quebec to visit family, stopping at various locations to see friends throughout the long journey. Father Moraud shared aspects of his mission and travels in the circular letters that he wrote to a variety of individuals that he addressed as benefactors and benefactrices. These benefactors in return sent donations and materials for Moraud's house and chapels. The following chapter considers the ways Moraud depicted himself and his missions in his circular letters, as well as a few oral recountings on Moraud as a priest. In particular, I focus on the type of faith that he taught during catechism, his strictness, his ambiguous role as an insider and an outsider, local resistance, and community responses to his death.

Father Moraud served as a priest in Patuanak and the northwest, at a time when the Catholic Church was arguably at its most powerful. The power of the Church politically and spiritually is illustrated by the centennial celebrations of the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1946, attended by Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodrigue Villeneuve (Archbishop of Quebec), premier Tommy Douglas, provincial government officials, as well as Indigenous parishioners from across the region. Like the treaty negotiations in 1906, the peninsula around the mission at Ile-a-la-Crosse was covered with tents, as people journeyed from throughout the watershed to attend this celebration and performance of the Church's power. The celebration is described in "The Religious History of St. John Baptiste Parish Ile-A-La-Crosse 150 Years" in the following way:

On the Feast of the Sacred Heart, splendid festivities took place when the mission celebrated 100 years of existence: 1846-1946. It was the realization of a great dream, a feast of thanksgiving for the faith imparted to the Metis, Cree and

¹English River First Nation, "Communities," Accessed 18 March 2017 <http://Desjarlais.erfn.net/community/>.

Chipewyan people of Ile a la Crosse. From the 29th of June to the 1st of July, about 6,000 people attended, coming from the surrounding communities and from the south. The highlight of the religious celebration was the visit of the Oblate Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodrigue Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, who presided the solemn mass and attended three days of festivities accompanied by six bishops, some fifty priests and as many Brothers... Three government officials of Saskatchewan were also present; the agent of Indian Affairs, and the Minister of Education. The Honourable Lloyd; Deputy M. Marion. Fr. Guy Remy was the parish priest at the time and Bishop Martin LaJeunesse was the vicar apostolic of Keewatin. A colourful flotilla with a gentle breeze playing in its banners and flags escorted the dignitaries to the mission who were greeted with a volley of joyful gunshots upon arrival.²

Elder Jacob Estralshenan, in response to my question about the centennial celebration provided more details about local attendance explaining, “yeah, yeah, yeah. I was there in forty-six yeah, there was a lot of people from all over. You see the tents all over there in Ile-a-la-Crosse, at the point. Haha, yeah, that was a lot of people... La Loche, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo, Dillon, Canoe Lake, even from Green Lake I think they stayed in town, Pinehouse. Pinehouse used to go to Il-a-la-Crosse from Pinehouse, they used to paddle up the river.”³ Former Chief of English River, Ralph Paul described those with outboard motors towing five or six canoes to the celebration.⁴ Others have shared memories of the brass band, train, and more generally camping with family from across the region at the celebration.⁵ Eight couples were married in an outdoor ceremony during the celebration.⁶ As Chief Paul describes, “There was an air of celebration all over. People were happy to see each other and local merchants made a killing...This event lasted about a week, but it was a religious celebration and with the number of Catholic clerics present, all could go to receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist.”⁷ Both the official religious history and oral recountings from community members draw attention to the size of the gathering, and note the celebratory and religious nature of the event—highlighting the power of the Church in the mid-twentieth century, and the spiritual meaningfulness of the centennial to local Indigenous people.

² “The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years,” Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/rcindex.html>.

³ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013. See Appendix A for more information about Jacob.

⁴ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 95. See Appendix A for more information about Ralph Paul.

⁵ Ibid. p. 97.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.



Figure 4.1: Celebrating the centennial of the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Photo from Keewatin-The Pas Archdiocese Archives.

The interest of the new Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government in northern Saskatchewan marked significant changes in communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. The province officially took over the funding of the oblate run residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1946, and an increase in funds resulted in new residences and buildings. Payments of the federal family allowance plan began in 1945, and this was used to compel parents to send their children to residential schools, like those at Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval.⁸ The provincial government, under the direction of premier Tommy Douglas, played an increasingly interventionist role in regulating hunting and fishing in the north, and introduced fur conservation areas, or fur blocks in 1946. Historian David Quiring's work shows how in the government's "plans to modernize the north, the CCF adopted an agenda assimilating northern Aboriginals into modern Canadian society."⁹ Indigenous people in the region were left to pursue their traditional lifestyles after the signing of Treaty Ten in 1906. This changed with the transfer of natural resources to the province in 1930 and again with the increased regulation in the northwest during the mid 1940s and on as a result of the CCF's northern policies. It is within this context that

⁸ David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), p. 188.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Father Moraud served as a priest at the satellite mission in Patuanak and surrounding communities along the Churchill River.

It is worth taking some time here to clarify my use of the term strict, which is a term I have adopted from those that I interviewed. Generally, in my conversations with community members references to Moraud's strictness referred to an unyielding adherence to a set of policies and doctrine regarding people's behavior in the community, his anti-development stance, and a pre-Vatican II Catholicism. The individuals I spoke with hesitated to outright critique Moraud, and the term strict was one they used when discussing aspects of Moraud's behavior and attitude that I would label as more colonial or authoritarian. Elder Ovide Wolverine's description of Moraud helps to illustrate what I identify more generally as Moraud's strictness.¹⁰ Ovide explained:

He was quite a guy, he had a strong faith, a real servant of God I think. But he wanted things done his own way, I think that's what I heard. By my times he was already getting old, so he was a little bit different. Yeah, like just anybody else, people had their little arguments with him, but he wasn't too bad of a man, he kept people in line I guess.¹¹

Later in our interview Ovide reiterated Moraud's strictness describing the priest as a "guy that stepped on everything, 'Ah, I don't want this—we don't want this.'"¹² Moraud unilaterally made decisions for the communities that he served that included issues relating to faith, but also the every day behavior of community members, and community development.

The tendency of those I interviewed to describe Moraud as strict, or wanting his own way, may have been a means to remain respectful while speaking about aspects of Moraud's tenure as priest that were causes of conflict when he was alive.¹³ My observations of community members describing Moraud as strict led me to ask those I interviewed to comment on the idea that he was strict, in order to create space in our conversations for accounts of Moraud beyond stories of his

¹⁰ I interviewed Ovide Wolverine once in 2014. For more information about Ovide and my work with him see Appendix A.

¹¹ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul; See also Ralph Paul, "A viewpoint on what Elders are," *Honi/Acimowin/Newsletter English River First Nation* Issue 15 (February/March 2017), p. Chief Paul explains that Dene Elders place a considerable emphasis on respect, and "will not impose their views on others unless asked."

miracles.¹⁴ Additionally, my positionality as a white settler woman and an outsider may have led people to think that I was primarily interested in positive stories of the priest, and made them more hesitant to discuss the colonial and racist aspects of Father Moraud and their history.

The catechism taught by Moraud, and the type of faith he emphasized in his sermons belonged to a pre-Vatican II era and were much in the character of early twentieth century Quebecois Catholicism. Moraud's teachings differed from those of priests serving in the region after him during the 1970s and more recently. Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie has written about his experiences as a priest in the region during the 1970s, and shared some of his observations regarding Catholicism in the region when I met with him in 2014. He noted that reforms were delayed in coming to the region, and that when he was a young priest at Beauval in the 1970s, older priests, such as Father Matthew at Pinehouse for example, had yet to incorporate the 1955 changes to the ritual washing of feet. More generally, Archbishop Sylvain's faith and practice differed substantially from earlier missionary priests like Moraud.¹⁵

Moraud's own circular letters suggest that his emphasis on Old Testament fear rather than New Testament love was critiqued during his lifetime. For example, in the conclusion to an undated circular letter, he writes, "After all the blunders I made... I am not sure at all, and it is not certain at all, that I will reach Heaven.... Bishop Charlebois used to tell me that I was still on the law of fear, not on the new law of love."¹⁶ Bishop Ovide Charlebois of the Keewatin Vicariate died on November 20th 1933, providing a timeframe for this critique, and indicating that earlier on in his mission work, Moraud's emphasis on fear rather than love was outdated. An emphasis on the law of fear is apparent in oral recountings of catechism lessons with Moraud. Because Elders have emphasized the strong faith taught by Father Moraud, I suggest that Moraud was foundational in shaping the Catholicism practiced in Patuanak by Elders today.

Several community members in the Meadow Lake Tribal Council's (MLTC) book *Voice of the Elders* in 2006, and in my own interviews in 2013 and 2014 mentioned Father Moraud's scroll with the two roads that he used to teach catechism. Although one community member mentioned having one of Moraud's scrolls in her shed, I was not able to see the famed scroll,

¹⁴ This strategy is an interviewing technique to create space for individuals to discuss more negative aspects of their history/story. By saying I heard Father Moraud was strict – I create an opportunity for people to either disagree with me or to share stories beyond the more typical narratives of his miracles.

¹⁵ See Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie, *Drumming from Within: Tales of Hope and Faith from Canada's North* (Novalis, 2009); Sylvain Lavoie, Interview with Amanda Fehr, St. Albert Alberta, 20 August 2014.

¹⁶ Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Undated, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

only hear descriptions of it. Bernie Eaglechild explained, “He [Moraud] was strict, I remember that. We used to go to catechism. And he taught like heaven and hell, no purgatory. So if you did something wrong you went to hell. He had this picture of a road that went to hell and one that went to heaven.”¹⁷ Others have referred to Father Moraud’s scroll of the two roads, or a Catholic Ladder that he used to teach catechism during his fifty years in Patuanak.



Figure 4.2: Father Moraud teaching catechism with his scroll, Patuanak 1939. Photo from la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

During Moraud’s time, individuals typically took their first communion when they were five or six.¹⁸ Mary Estralshenan describes catechism lessons with Father Moraud in *Voice of the Elders*:

Father Moraud taught us a lot when we were kids. We all went to Father’s house and rang the bell at 9 o’clock in the morning. The priest taught us how to pray. He had big papers on the wall and asked what is this and what is this. We didn’t know some of them but he taught us. There was a girl there that was a good prayer. When we went inside the church we made the sign of the cross and we were told to say rosary. Even the kids said rosary in the old days. I didn’t know how to pray. One prayer was hard for me. Sometimes I couldn’t pray right and didn’t say the

¹⁷ Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River Dene Nation, 13 February 2014.

¹⁸ “Mary Estrosinaire,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 117. See my discussion in chapter one regarding my standardization of the name Estralshenan.

right words. That girl prayed right, she was just like a nun. We had to stay longer until we learned how to pray.¹⁹

Earlier in her narrative, Mary notes learning about the Blessed Virgin Mary and prayer from her father and grandmother, but here the emphasis is on learning the proper way to pray from Father Moraud. Father Moraud is credited with teaching a generation of Elders how to pray, rather than the parents and grandparents of these Elders who are described as Catholic. Delia Black, who grew up at Dipper Lake and currently lives in Patuanak, also shared stories of catechism at Father Moraud's house in *Voice of the Elders*. I met Delia while I was in Patuanak, but did not interview her. Her account in 2006 notes Moraud's emphasis on the saints in his teachings, and the efforts Moraud made to ensure children attended catechism. She explained, "Father Moraud used to teach us a lot of things about the saints. When we used to go to father Moraud's house and one child was missing he used to go and find them and brings them to Father's house and teach us about religion and the catechism we had to learn."²⁰ Significant in Delia's recounting is that they had to learn about religion and catechism, and the fact that Moraud would fetch children who were absent from the lessons. Moraud's emphasis on the saints perhaps provides context for how his parishioners would interpret his own actions and how they perceived his miracles.

Elder and former chief Ralph Paul shares the story of his first communion in his memoirs. His recounting of his first communion and attending sermons by Father Moraud as a child emphasize the role of fear in Moraud's teachings. Rather than a saint, Ralph Paul describes a strict figure whose black robes and long beard frightened him as a child. Chief Paul explained:

The church bell rang and we trudged off to the Church. The usual rituals were performed and now comes the communion, my first. I timidly go to the communion railing, knelt down and I awaited my turn. Finally, the altar boy places a round yellow plate under my chin and Father Moraud places the real host in my mouth. I closed my mouth, but forgot the other part of his previous instruction. The host got stuck in the roof of my mouth and immediately my young hands go to my mouth. This offended the priest, and in front of all the congregation, he mumbles something and he slaps my hand. This frightened me as a five year old and I got scared and started to cry. There in front of the congregation is how I remember my first holy communion.²¹

Chief Paul's recounting does not focus on Moraud's status as a saint, nor does he later in his memoir excuse the strictness of Moraud with a discussion of his miracles. Rather, Chief Paul

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Delia Black," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 100.

²¹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 21.

describes himself as a former Catholic, whose experiences at BIRS caused him to lose faith in the religion practiced by his parents and grandparents. One can see the law of fear that Bishop Charlbois critiqued Moraud for, evident in his strict teachings of heaven and hell with his scroll, and here in Chief Paul's description of being shamed in front of the congregation.

Chief Paul is critical of Moraud's teachings and emphasis on sin and damnation, rather than forgiveness. He describes services where the sexes were separated, and that had a solemn atmosphere—different from the Catholic services I have attended in Patuanak more recently that were filled with country-western style gospel songs sung in Dene. Chief Paul reflects:

The highlights of these church services were the sermons and the holy communion. We all dreaded Father Moraud's sermons. It was all hell and damnation. We were all deemed to be born defective in that we are all born with aboriginal sin or was it original sin? The blame was on Adam and Eve story and the apple tree in that far away Garden of Eden.²²

Here Chief Paul clearly connects Father Moraud's emphasis on fear, and his focus on the two roads, with the colonialism and racism of outside agencies and institutions in the northwest. Moraud's emphasis on original sin, and hell and damnation is understood by Chief Paul as being because of the congregation's Indigeneity, an interpretation that would have been reinforced by the teachings (religious and non) at BIRS. Moraud's circulars reflect at best a paternalistic attitude towards "his Indians," and are filled with generalizations about the laziness of those who live in Patuanak, and gendered critiques about unfaithful women that he believes deserve to suffer in the afterlife.²³

More generally, Chief Paul describes mass as meaningless and depressing, even though his father served as the choirmaster. He explains:

²² Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 18.

²³ For example Moraud writes, "I lost one of my Indians, two weeks, from now, He died, not suddenly, I would have had time, to give him the last sacraments, but his wife a blockhead, who had passed the winter, every night, running in the village, playing poker. And abandoned her childrens. During that time, her daughter, had many lovers. Result, she became a mother at sixteen years old. She saw, that her husband was sick. I would have time to visit him. I don't think, that her mourning, last very long." Louis Moraud, Circular, Patuanak, 11 May 1963 McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. A second example is apparent in a circular from later that year where Moraud explains, "I was at Primeau Lake: two men, from Dipper Lake, came to look for me, to go to Patuanak, for the funeral mass, and the burial I had anointed her many times. She deserved to suffer, her first husband, had the infantile paralysis...He made pity...she didn't stay with him. She like better, to have fun, with the other men and boys." Louis Moraud, Circular, Dipper Lake, 5 November 1963 McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. See also, Moraud describing, "And during my absence, a bad accident, happened. One boy shot himself, with a shot gun. A carelessness, from his part. His gun was loaded, and in wanting to shoot a duck. The shot started, and passed through, his neck, and his head. He died immediately. It was a big stroke, for the Indians. But, Like every thing there memory, is very short, and already, they forgot." Louis Moraud, Circular, June 30 1963 McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

I recall the first part of the service where this priest dipped a foot long brass sprinkler in a container and sprayed the congregation with holy water. All heads were bent down and made the sign of the cross. All this time my dad was chanting the Gregorian chant called the “Asper Ges Me.” During the mass proper, they chanted the Kyrie Elieson, Gloria in Excelsis Deo, and later the Credo in Unum Deo. All the Elders sang and chanted along. It was slow and mournful and devoid of any meaning to us. It was very depressing and we had to do that every Sunday.²⁴

Chief Paul’s description of Moraud’s Mass itself is one of the most detailed I have read or heard. He is also one of the most openly critical of Father Moraud. Even though he does not name Moraud in the above quote, it is apparent that Moraud is the priest being referred to given the time period as well as the broader context of the text.

There are suggestions within Chief Paul’s memoir that indicate a shifting historical consciousness on his part regarding the relationship between Catholicism and Indigeneity, resulting in his more recent interpretation of Moraud that does not allow Moraud’s perceived sainthood to counteract or contradict the colonialism, judgment, and fear apparent in his teachings. Here, Chief Paul is reinterpreting the services and teachings of his childhood as an adult who no longer practices the Catholic faith, and is committed to rediscovering pre-Catholic Dene spirituality and teachings. Other elements of his memoir complicate this narrative, as he notes as a child wanting to be selected as an altar boy to serve in the Mass and playing make believe Catholic processions with peers. Similarly, the amount of shame and fear he describes at his first communion is likely due to the fact that he belonged to a very Catholic family and at five years old understood the importance of the ritual. In effect, it is because it was meaningful to him at the time that the memory of the event continues to be a traumatic one for him.

Other Elders have emphasized how meaningful the prayers they learned from Moraud were, and some have even noted with sadness the change from conducting the mass in Latin to English. In Chief Paul’s historical consciousness these were somber, un-meaningful events that people were forced to attend. This more generally relates to a shift in historical consciousness amongst some community members that dissociates Indigeneity from the historical Catholicism of Patuanak and the region that I have noted in earlier chapters.

I interviewed Elder Agnes Gardiner (nee Roy) in her home in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2014, and she began her account of Father Moraud with her memories of attending catechism with him

²⁴ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 19.

when she was six years old. She explained, “Father Moraud was there, and I remember I had to go pray. He gave me a little chair. You sit there, you gotta really listen huh, he’s mean...after I went back again, about eleven years for my first communion.”²⁵ Agnes’s observation that Moraud was mean fits with other recountings of his teachings of the two roads, and of being forced to attend catechism and pray in a specific way. However, the majority of her story about Moraud, the sole topic of our interview, did not focus on him being mean or even strict. Almost immediately after setting up her story of Moraud by describing catechism with him when she was young, she shifted to discussing his miracles, explaining, “He do miracles cause I see it with my eyes huh.” Like others, the significance of witnessing and experiencing Father Moraud’s miracles is given more weight in individual historical consciousness than the emphasis his teachings placed on fear. Several times during our conversation, Agnes referred to Moraud’s status as a saint.

Agnes was born in 1932 and grew up at Halfway Lake, between Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, so attended catechism in Patuanak with Father Moraud rather than at the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I interviewed Agnes a second time in October of 2014. She passed away in March of 2015. The recording of our first interview included her husband watching television in the background, her birds chirping, and part way through a visit by her daughter Shirley, who had helped to set up the meeting, and participated in our conversation. I learned during that meeting that I had interviewed Agnes’s son, Leon Gardiner, back in 2006 about his encounter with the Virgin Mary (discussed in chapter seven). Prior to our interview Agnes had been sick in the hospital, and according to her family members told stories of Moraud that she had never shared before. Father Moraud was a friend of her father’s and Agnes had memories of Father Moraud from the time she was six and went to catechism until his passing in 1965.

Fitting with his emphasis on fear, punishment, and eternal damnation in his sermons and catechism, Father Moraud had a reputation more generally for being strict in the community regarding drinking, gambling, pre-marital sex, dancing, and certain Dene spiritual beliefs such as providing offerings to the lake. In effect, he employed his own version of the Durieu System well into the mid-twentieth century.²⁶ Here the faith of parishioners was what made it possible for

²⁵ Agnes Gardiner, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse Saskatchewan, 19 June 2014.

²⁶ Historian Raymond Huel describes the Durieu system explaining: “the Oblates in British Columbia closely regimented and controlled the activities of Natives and their communities through the “Durieu system,” a refinement of the *reducciones*, the older Jesuit enclaves of Paraguay.” My work challenges Huel’s suggestion that

Moraud to socially and politically regulate communities, as withholding communion was typically used to punish those who had done something that Moraud deemed inappropriate. Ralph Paul suggests how Moraud's judgments were accepted and replicated within the community. He explains, "Then came the communion part. All attendees were expected to partake. If a person did not receive this Holy Communion, peoples eyebrows were raised. Why?? Was written across their inquiring faces."²⁷ In this way, it was not simply the withholding of communion which would have spiritual significance, but a public shaming within the broader community.

Furthermore, there is evidence that it was not simply the priest who censured certain behaviors, as the community accepted these teachings. Chief Paul explains that community members, including members of his own family, treated children born out of wedlock poorly: "At that time, due to the Catholic teachings, it was sinful for a single woman to have children. It happened many times, though...These children were considered to be a "child of sin" and were treated unmercifully by the Catholic adherents of Father Moraud."²⁸ This statement complicates some of Chief Paul's earlier reflections regarding the meaningfulness of the mass, as here notions around sin are meaningful to Catholics in the community.

Fitting with the Durieu system Moraud often knew why people missed church, and in effect employed watchmen. Chief Paul describes:

The priest would not tolerate anyone staying out late at night. There was an Elder hired by the priest to go around in the evening and tell children and youth to get on home. Edward Tcho usually carried a willow twig to herd the reluctant kids to get on home. It was also the time when birds would also retire for the night. They used to find their shelter in the eaves of roof buildings. As kids, we would hunt them with our slingshots. But this practice was curtailed by an edict of this priest.²⁹

"this attempt at total social control was absent in the prairie provinces," by drawing attention to Moraud's work in northern Saskatchewan during the twentieth century. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Metis*, p. xix.

²⁷ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 19.

²⁸ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, pp. 28- 29. Chief Paul raises this issue several times in his memoirs, noting how these views affected his own family by describing how an orphaned boy, Harry Gunn Jr. born out of wedlock was treated poorly by Ralph's uncles. He explains, "(I blame the catholic teaching for the way he was treated by my Uncles)... Imagine calling a new-born baby, a child of sin. That was the designation as introduced by the catholic priest." Ralph's grandmother, who he describes as a saint, was the only one to treat the boy kindly. Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 8.

²⁹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 10. Ralph elaborates on Moraud's surveillance of the community later in his manuscript noting, "If they were not in church, Father Moraud would want to know why, and he usually did know. Then he would reprimand the recalcitrant unmercifully." Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 35.

Chief Paul's recounting of Edward Tcho working for Moraud when combined with his earlier discussion of how local people accepted Moraud's teachings, suggests that this form of the Durieu system while perhaps initiated by Moraud was not simply imposed by an outside priest, but supported by some community members. In fact, other Elders I have spoke with have nostalgically remembered earlier time periods when children were herded home by a stick wielding Elder as helping to create a safe community. In this way, older community members may have embraced aspects of Moraud's authoritarianism that Chief Paul criticizes today. Most of the Elders I spoke with agreed that Moraud was strict, but few connected this more generally to colonialism that they recognized in other contexts. For example, in Ile-a-la-Crosse, in the early 1970s, the community forcibly took over control of the school from the Church, in part because of the colonial power of the Church in the region. This story sits alongside stories praising Father Moraud as a saint, even though he served as a priest until 1965, and accounts of his strictness are similar to those provided by community members as examples of what they were reacting against in the early 1970s.³⁰

Besides Ralph Paul, Elder Frank McIntyre (1922-2015) was the most critical voice I found regarding Father Moraud, drawing attention to Moraud's role in banning traditional practices. Frank worked closely with Jarvenpa in the late 1970s, and was also interviewed in the 2006 *Voice of the Elders* publication. I interviewed Frank in his home in Patuanak twice in 2013 when he was 91 years old.³¹ Frank was the chief of English River after Moraud's passing, and played a key role in developing the road that connects Patuanak to the outside world. In 2006 Frank explained, "We had a very strict Missionary here. His name is Father Moraud, his grave is over here. He didn't want us to act like in the past, our ancestors, the singing and the drumming. 'No, that's no good.'"³² Others I interviewed noted the role of the priests in banning sweat lodges, dances, and traditional medicine. They did not explicitly connect this practice to Father Moraud, even though Moraud would have been the resident priest during the times they were discussing. This reinforces my argument around a tendency to attribute the colonial aspects of Catholicism during the early and mid twentieth century more generally to the Church rather than to Father

Some additional context for Moraud's strictness towards slingshots can be found in his circular from 1954 where he writes "some not very strait lads" broke a window of his house while he was away. Louis Moraud, Circular, 9 December 1954, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

³⁰ See chapter six for my discussion of the school takeover in Ile-a-la-Crosse.

³¹ See Appendix A for more information about Frank McIntyre and my work with him.

³² "Frank McIntyre," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 141.

Moraud, as a way of making sense of his dual roles as a colonial priest and a local saint in whom residents have legitimate faith. Even Jacob Estralshenan's observation that the priests hypocritically expected the Dene to accept their stories, while refusing to believe Dene stories of spiritual power, does not explicitly mention Moraud by name.³³ During our conversation Jacob discussed Moraud's miracles, and attributed the strong historical Catholic faith in the community to Moraud.

Moraud's strictness in Patuanak and surrounding communities extended beyond catechism, Mass, and the regulation of behaviors deemed to be sinful. More broadly, he politically and economically influenced the region by stopping efforts to connect Patuanak by road to outside communities and preventing developments such as a fish plant in Patuanak. This suggests similarity and continuity between Moraud and earlier priests such as Father Rapet whose influence during the Treaty Ten negotiations was discussed in the previous chapter. Following Moraud's death in 1965, significant changes took place in Patuanak, as the community moved towards building a road to connect their community to Beauval and has since embraced a variety of economic opportunities, most recently an agreement with Cameco and Areva. Because of Father Moraud, Patuanak was one of the last communities in the region to be connected by road. Frank McIntyre was the chief of English River in 1965 and made connections between Moraud's passing and his ability as chief to begin the process to have a road built to Patuanak. Quiring more generally has written about the role of traders and churches in resisting the development of infrastructure like roads in the region, observing, "Although northerners often asked for roads, their construction also met opposition since roads proved a mixed blessing. Some traders thought roads would bring competition and loss of business, and churches feared roads would carry in more whites, drinking, and trouble."³⁴ Quiring more specifically outlines Father Moraud's work to prevent a fish plant from being built in Patuanak, "Waite also wanted to build a plant not far away at Patuanak, but met resistance from Father Moraud. The Roman Catholic priest feared the project would bring demoralization and 'hotels, beer parlors, theaters.' As a result of government and Church opposition to Waite's plans, development of the west-side fish industry suffered."³⁵

³³ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

³⁴ Quiring, p. 77.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 139.

Moraud's involvement in stopping roads and fish plants is supported by comments made in his circulars where he expresses the paternalistic fear that "his Indians" would be corrupted by development and increased association with white people. Within this context, Moraud encouraged the Indigenous people he worked with to speak their languages and continue to live traditional economic life styles based on hunting, fishing, and trapping. Even within his satellite mission, he showed more prejudice towards those living in Patuanak, whom he saw as corrupt and lazy compared to those living at Dipper Lake making a living by trapping and fishing.³⁶ Here Moraud's own ideals of Indigeneity and Catholicism sit in opposition to the problems of civilization that Moraud identifies in the white people living in communities like Buffalo Narrows.³⁷ His fellow missionaries, doctors, traders, and government agents do not receive the same criticism, suggesting how class, Catholic faith, and whiteness intersected in the region. In this way, access to stores, cigarettes, and government services and supports are potential dangers for Moraud's congregation. For example, Moraud describes a visit to "all my little missions" noting:

I liked to visit those...living in their own villages. They live a better life than those Indians from Patuanak. The proximity of the stores, is no good, for the Indians. They become leasy, and pass the whole day, sittid in the counter, talking smoking cigarettes. Those, from Dipper Lake, Primeau they are busy all day, visiting their nets, trapping.³⁸

This sentiment contrasting the laziness of those residing in Patuanak with the industriousness of those at Dipper, Primeau, Knee Lake, and Cree Lake is repeated in other circulars. For example in a hand written note at the bottom of a circular from 1964 Moraud notes his preference for his

³⁶ Other scholars have written about the depiction of Indigenous people as lazy by outsiders within a colonial context. See for example, John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008). Moraud's rejection of modernity in some ways compliments leaders of Indigenous revitalization movements. My focus on local historical consciousness that interprets Moraud primarily through a Catholic or colonial lens and the differing context of the twentieth century has led me to not situate my work within the context of revitalization movements. See for example: Homer Barnett, *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*. (New York: Knopf, 1970).

³⁷ See for example, Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Undated, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. Moraud's comments about the drunkenness and lack of civilization evident in the white men living in Buffalo Narrows is included in a handwritten note at the end of the letter dated January 14th from Buffalo Narrows.

³⁸ Louis Moraud, Circular, Isle a la Crosse, 17 March 1964, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

satellite missions because of the HBC and Co-op stores in Patuanak and his assessment that those in Patuanak “live on rations or pensions from [the] Indian Department.”³⁹

Father Rapet and the Church advocated for the Dene to take Treaty Ten in 1906, in part to receive increased rations and support from the federal government. In contrast, Moraud sees increased social support (introduced in 1945) as corrupting, and in turn pushes for the Dene to live apart. Moraud’s concerns about non-traditional lifestyles resulting in laziness does not extend to interfering with Indian Affairs policies or Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS), even though he is aware that parents do not want to send their children to school.⁴⁰ The fact that following Moraud’s death the chief and council of English River moved towards getting a road to the community and other developments, indicate that at the time Moraud’s position on development was contested. Community members make connections between Moraud’s passing and changes in their community.⁴¹ Jarvenpa has also observed the impact that Father Moraud’s death had on the community, describing it as marking “an important transition.” He elaborates:

Many families abandoned small outlying villages and gravitated toward new houses, a school, and other services emerging in Patuanak. Such changes were fueled primarily by a dramatic rise in transfer payments from the federal government to the English River band. Gravel road access to the settlement was provided in the late 1970s paralleling appearance of new uranium mining developments in northern Saskatchewan.⁴²

Ironically, Moraud’s strictness over the road tends to be reinterpreted in more recent historical consciousness as an example of how he protected the community.

³⁹ Louis Moraud Circular, 16 December 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. In other circulars Moraud more generally stereotypes all Dene people as lazy. For example, “If I would hired a chippeweyan, it would took an eternity to built a boat house, and work bad done...”³⁹ Louis Moraud, Circular Patuanak 5 May 1964, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁴⁰ For example, in a handwritten addition dated December 14th 1954, Moraud comments on children being forced to attend residential school. He writes, “I just, finished the catechism.. Only three children. All the others are at the Indian school at Beauval, and the half breeds, they had sent some of their childrens, at the catholic school at Isle a la Crosse. The Indians seems more disposed in favor of the school. But the Indian Agent is after them. They are obliged to sent their childrens to school. But the childrens them selves, cry to go to school. It is the childrens who forced the parents to sent them to school...” Louis Moraud, Circular, 9 December 1954, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁴¹ See for example Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014; Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013; Frank McIntyre, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River Dene Nation, 20 August 2013; “Frank McIntyre,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 141.

⁴² Miguel Astor-Aguilera and Robert Jarvenpa, “Comparing Indigenous Pilgrimages,” p. 493. While the timing of development following Moraud’s death could be a coincidence, community members connect changes in Patuanak with the priest’s death. Furthermore, other communities were connected by roads and included development like fish plants before Patuanak because of Moraud’s stance against development.

Contrasting with his critique of government welfare, Moraud himself provided support and assistance to community members, in particular women and children whose husbands/fathers were out trapping, or who had been widowed/orphaned. While examples of his efforts to socially control community members seem to have targeted women in particular, especially relating to pregnancies out of wedlock and blaming women for problems in their families, he also had a reputation for helping women and children—especially those who resided in satellite communities. Bernie Eaglechild described this role of Father Moraud stating, “I remember when we were living in Primeau, he was not just a priest. The doctor he was, back then with our people being, what do you call it, the men went off trapping leaving the women and children. During that time we surely needed that assistance, and he used to have everything. He used to check on the ladies.”⁴³

Margaret Wolverine in *Voice of the Elders* shared similar sentiments, where she describes how Father Moraud assisted her mother and family when her father was sick and after he passed away: “I guess Father Moraud came back by dog team and told them that the plane will be here to pick up your family to go back. The plane will be here. Watch for the plane. It was a long way to walk from there to get to the plane. That was before Christmas and it was cold. My dad was sick and we had to take him back to Patuanak.”⁴⁴ Margaret’s family caught the plane in December, and in April her father died in Ile-a-la-Crosse, where he was buried. Margaret and her mom stayed in Ile-a-la-Crosse with the nuns because her mom was expecting a baby. After the baby was born and the ice had cleared, Margaret and her family once again depended on Father Moraud to help them return to Patuanak. She explains, “my mom told Father Moraud we didn’t know how to get back home to Patuanak. This was after my mother had a baby in the month of May. So the priest said I can take you back to Patuanak because I have a big boat.” When Margaret, her mother, and baby brother Archie returned to Patuanak, Father Moraud continued to help them, fixing their canoe and painting it for them so that they could go fishing and return to Knee Lake.⁴⁵ Stories of Father Moraud helping her family are a significant part of Margaret’s story in *Voice of the Elders*, and illustrate the variety of roles that Moraud played within his missions.

⁴³ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁴⁴ “Margaret Wolverine,” *Voice of the Elders*, 164.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

During his life, Father Moraud was connected to the Indigenous people he served as a missionary but also separate from them, marking a point of continuity between his mission and the priests and nuns discussed in the previous chapters. Moraud's ability to speak Cree and Dene, and the fact that he spent nearly fifty years in the region in many ways living like local people were significant points of connection, as were his abilities to perform miracles in the territory that were witnessed by parishioners. For example, in our interview Max Morin from Ile-a-la-Crosse connected the perception of Moraud as a saint with his lifestyle, contrasting Moraud with other outsiders that he labeled as transients, or people who are not from the north who come to work for a few years. Max explained, "He [Father Moraud] lived simply and he lived with the people."⁴⁶

However, Moraud never completely achieved the status of an insider, as both his attitude towards the people he worked with and his "strange behaviours" were points of separation. Especially in his circulars, he is the missionary and those he lives with are the Indians, or at times "my Indians." Additionally, his dismissive and judgmental tone towards the Indigenous people he has made his life with as well as a clear sense of loneliness suggests that he is not truly a part of the community that would later claim him as their saint. For example, in a circular written in 1963, towards the end of Moraud's life in Patuanak he writes: "I have visitors visitors, pretty near every night: Indian visitors. Specially one, when he arrived, he seems not to know, when it is time to leave. And when he decided to go out, I feel so sleepy, I have only the idea, to go to sleep. I think, that all the events, that happen, it is hard to live alone all the time, no companion, no priest no brother. But I have to accept my fate."⁴⁷

In addition to Moraud's separation from his "Indian visitors," is his resigned sense of fate. The notion that it is his fate to spend his life in such a way is echoed in a hand written note at the bottom of the same circular, "For me, I think I will pass all my life with these Indians forty nine years since I live with the same Indians. Chippewyan [sic] Indians."⁴⁸ Moraud's work as a satellite missionary additionally separates him from his fellow missionaries in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and his loneliness for the companionship of other priests and brothers is echoed in later

⁴⁶ Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014. See Appendix A for more information about Max and our interview.

⁴⁷ Moraud, Circular, Patuanak, 11 May 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence. Glenbow Archives.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

circulars.⁴⁹ Moraud's almost bitter narrative of isolation and suffering reflects both the colonial narrative of a colonizer separate from those he is colonizing, as well as that of a saint which requires personal sacrifice and an acceptance of one's fate.

Contrasting with Moraud's resignation at his fate and loneliness, in other instances he writes about the power of the landscape of the north in inspiring his faith—drawing attention to the complexity of this twentieth-century mission priest and his contradictory sentiments. For instance in a circular from 1965 he writes:

The few families, lived at one mile from the chapel. They had to cross the lake, it is very cold, to walk on the lake at half past six on morning. Dear Good friends, in spite of those little annoyances, - cant hindered myself to admire the beautiful sceneries of the north of Cree Lake. If I was a poet, describe to you the grandeur of the thousand of islands, the magnificence of the forest, the lake. Even the wind, who blow, through the bougs of the trees, has its beauty. A man who have a little faith in God, cannot hinder himself, to believe that all those beauties of the nature, have an author.⁵⁰

Here Moraud depicts a place where people brave the cold to attend morning service, and there is a beauty that he feels can only be attributed to God's presence. Other elements of his teachings focused on original sin and fear, or as Ralph Paul suggests, "Aboriginal sin," but here Moraud recognizes northwestern Saskatchewan as a place saturated with God. Similarly, Agnes Gardiner shared with me a story of Father Moraud explaining to the bishop the presence of Jesus and God in the region. She explained, "'You see that little house, there's Jesus there. Jesus all over...Same God as inside is outside, God's all over.' Father Moraud, said that to Bishop."⁵¹ The recognition

⁴⁹ For example Moraud contrasted his time in Ile-a-la-Crosse with returning to Patuanak, "Nice company with the Good Fathers and Brothers. The meals are already served. I will find it hard, when at Patuanak, to start cooking, to rise at morning in a cold house, to start the fire, in the box stoves. But according to appearances, it is good for health." Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 30 November 1954 McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives; Moraud expressed similar sentiments at the departure of the bishop and brother from Ile-a-la-Crosse: "And I remained alone, with my Indians. But I had no time to cry." Louis Moraud, Circular, 10 August 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives; Another example is found in one of his last circulars where he writes: "They are lucky, those missionaries, from Isle a la Crosse. I don't envy them. But I don't know, if they realized, the comfort they have. They have nothing to do, with the heating, they have two hired men, to make the fire day and night. The Good Sisters, prepared the meals. They have only to go to refectory: all the meals, are on the table. They had only, to sit down at the table and to eat. But I chase those bad thoughts. It is hard to be alone, to be short of many things. But I don't want to change, Dear Good Friends, I stop myself, to reflect, if I would not have other stories, to relate to you." Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 7 March 1965, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁵⁰ Louis Moraud, Circular, Patuanak, 22 January 1965, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁵¹ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

of Jesus and God in northwestern Saskatchewan lays the foundation for Moraud's miracles and sainthood grounded in the region, and in turn a local claiming of Moraud as a saint.

Travel between communities was a significant part of Father Moraud's life as a missionary in the north, and more generally for the people of the region into the early 1970s. Individuals would travel from communities like Dipper Lake to Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak for supplies, hospital care, church, and celebrations. Community members have joked about Moraud's frugality and efforts to travel as cheaply as possible, hitching rides when he could with community members, supply planes, and government officials. Yet, Moraud had a motor for his boat, could pay to take a plane when he needed to, and traveled with government officials such as the Indian Agent, separating him from those he served. Planes especially were associated with the colonial officials and outsiders.⁵² As Ralph Paul explains, "There were no roads and the only way out was by canoe or if they could afford it, they could fly out. But this mode of transportation was for the white people at that time."⁵³

Moraud's whiteness, access to resources such as flights, and power in the region, aligned him with a group of non-Indigenous individuals who were increasingly powerful and separate within the region. In other contexts, community members have noted the roles historically played by non-Indigenous people in their communities as priests, doctors, teachers, Indian Agents, DNR officials, and police.⁵⁴ In effect, this was how colonialism worked in the north during the mid-twentieth century, and local Indigenous people rarely held positions of power within their own communities. Although Moraud is not typically named as part of this process, his positionality and behavior during his tenure as priest made him one of the powerful. Moraud's circulars hint at his interactions with officials such as the local Indian Agent, as he describes catching a flight with the Indian Agent and reciting the rosary with the Indian Agent and his family.⁵⁵ Here, the Catholic faith is also significant in Moraud's relationship with the Indian Agent.

Beyond his modes of travelling, his decisions of when to travel, where to travel, and prayer while traveling separated Moraud from the Indigenous people of the region. Father Moraud arriving in the middle of the night and taking risks when travelling was seen as strange to the Dene and Metis he served. Sometimes this strangeness extended to interpreting Moraud's

⁵² Quiring, p. 79.

⁵³ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 63.

⁵⁴ Ovide and Irene Desjarlais and Barb Flett, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 2014. For a more detailed discussion, see chapter six and Appendix A.

⁵⁵ Louis Moraud, Circular, 9 December 1954, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

actions as miracles. More generally there is a sense that the priest's behavior differed from that of locals. In the *Voice of the Elders* collection, Louise Dawatsare observes, "Father Moraud used to do a lot of strange things."⁵⁶ In a similar manner, Agnes Gardiner described Father Moraud arriving at her family's home at midnight in winter:

About midnight blowing snow long time ago, when it's cold it's cold, about fifty below. And my dad and me, and my mom...I was still playing with little dolls.... and somebody's at the door. 'Oh my god,' said my dad...so crazy. Opened the door, Father Moraud's just full of ice, the big beard. 'What's the matter with you, you crazy, say my dad?' Father: 'I'm not crazy, But I see that island, I see the island I came in straight.' Cause we lived right at that little island. 'And my Jesus in the back.' He packed light. Went to drink outside, went to wash his face outside, even fifty below. That's the story."⁵⁷

Father Moraud's often included descriptions of such winter journeys in his circular letters, where he emphasized reciting his rosary and reading the breviary as part of his travels.⁵⁸ Two of the widely shared stories in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse that are used as examples of Moraud's miracles involve travelling, and his prayer during travel. Some individuals who I spoke with keep pictures of Father Moraud in their vehicle to protect them when they travel.⁵⁹ Travel was a significant component in historical consciousness relating to his sainthood, but during his life was more generally a sign of difference from the community members he served.

Recountings by Ralph Paul and others include evidence of Dene people resisting Father Moraud's more colonial impositions and efforts to control how people lived. An everyday example of this was that local people continued to drink, gamble, have pre-marital sex, and according to some community members, secretly continued some of their Dene spiritual practices and beliefs.⁶⁰ Even though the priests refused to believe stories about Dene medicine men like Crowhead, Jacob Estralshenan still learned that story from his grandfather, though Jacob himself

⁵⁶ "Louise Dawatsare," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

⁵⁸ Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Undated, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. In another circular from 1964 he writes, "I had two good boys, they had a bunch of dogs harnessed in each one of the toboggan: six dogs. It was cold to cross Dipper Lake But I never lay down in the toboggan. Though it is not warm I pass my time, in looking at the scenery and reading in my book, breviary." Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 17 March 1964, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁵⁹ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁶⁰ For example, stories have been shared of Grandpa Potbelly who continued to have sweat lodges after the priests arrived, even though he was scared of the priests. Grandpa Potbelly turned himself into a loon and can still be seen/heard. Others have shared stories of continuing practices of making offerings to the Lake. More recently, community members worked with Albert Daigneault from Ile-a-la-Crosse and his descendants to revive sweat lodges in Patuanak. Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014; Patrick Daigneault, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Prince Albert, 28 August 2014; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

did not characterize that as an act of resistance.⁶¹ Ralph Paul explains more explicitly how people went against Father Moraud's teachings explaining, "The local priest was against anyone in the village to have any type of entertainment or fun. One such activity was card playing. He did not object to solitaire or skunk, but when low ball was played, he was up in arms and preaching against this devil inspired activity. But, the people went ahead and played low ball. This was a way of gambling."⁶² It should be noted that here, and in other places in Chief Paul's memoir he simply refers to Father Moraud as "the priest." This is part of a larger trend within recountings to couch more critical comments more generally against "the priest," or Church authorities, rather than Father Moraud, though Chief Paul more than others also critiqued Moraud directly.

Moraud's own circulars and letters by community members to their bishop provide some of the clearest examples of resistance to his mission, and include information that is absent in the oral histories I have conducted and read. In his circulars, Moraud clearly equates faith with obedience, and is critical of times when his parishioners laughed at him. For example in 1963 he writes, "The chippeweyans, who are strong on the exterior demonstrations, free after that, to rail against their missionary. To laugh at him But this time, they had a big trouble, to turn round and round, their squif and big motor of eighteen horse, it made a terrible wind. Big waves, they were all wet, and our selves too."⁶³ Here Moraud equates disloyalty and disrespect to him personally with a lack of sincere Catholic faith. It also suggests some of the limits to Moraud's colonial and saintly power during his life, where he was outnumbered and often dependent on members of his congregation who did not take him as seriously as he preferred. Local people refused to accept Moraud's equation of deference with sincere Catholic faith, complicating the tendency of some community members today to view Elders in the past as unquestionably deferential to priests and bishops.⁶⁴ Moraud's equation of faith with deference has possibly been incorporated by more recent generations of Elders, such as Sarazine Ratt and Christine George, and has certainly influenced how individuals like Bernie Eaglechild understand what it means to be a "hardcore" Catholic, even if in practice community members have historically had more complex relationships with Church authority figures.

⁶¹ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

⁶² Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 36.

⁶³ Louis Moraud, Circular, Patuanak, 10 August 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

⁶⁴ See my discussion of Bernie Eaglechild's differing historical consciousness from her mother Christine George in chapter two. See also my discussion of Grandma Bébé Ratt in Appendix A.

The most direct examples of resistance to Moraud that I found are requests by the people of Patuanak for a new priest. Again, this is a story that is not included in local historical consciousness, but is noted by Moraud in his circulars and is evident in letters written by community members to Bishops Lajeunesse and Dumouchel. In the same 1963 circular mentioned earlier, Moraud writes:

This time, the Indians Didn't ask the bishop for a meeting, they knew what its hanged at the bottom of their nose (ce qui leur pendait au bout du nez). The subject of their meeting, is only to talk against their missionary. They had a meeting, the first visit of Bishop Dumouchel. They asked for another priest, the reason, they were fatiguing, of the one they had. Bishop Dumouchel answered them, if not are satisfied of the one you have, I will close the mission and you will have no priest at all. The meeting was finished from there. I conclude my relation.⁶⁵

This quote signifies a more negative relationship between Moraud and local people than one would ascertain on oral recountings alone, confirming a shift in local historical consciousness. More importantly still, it suggests Indigenous agency against the local Church authority and within the larger organization of the Catholic Church where they felt free to appeal directly to the bishop for a new priest. The fact that Dene people asked to meet with Bishop Dumouchel to express concerns about Moraud and request a new missionary supports critiques that Ralph Paul and Frank McIntyre have provided, while also challenging Chief Paul's assessment that his parents and grandparent's generation uncritically accepted everything about Father Moraud. Dumouchel's threat to close the mission, and the perception that that threat silenced complaints, indicates the necessity of appreciating the sincere Catholic faith prevalent amongst Dene people living in Patuanak and along the Churchill River. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, understanding this strong Catholic faith is essential to understanding the broader religious and political history in the region. Moraud's own religious significance, most apparent in his miracles and subsequent local status as a saint, has further shaped historical consciousness. While this section has included discussions of Moraud's teachings and the various roles he played during his mission, recountings of his miracles (discussed in the following chapter) are necessary to make sense of how he continues to be understood in Patuanak and the northwest.

Community members did not only ask for Moraud to be replaced during that one meeting with Bishop Dumouchel. During the course of nearly two decades, community members in the

⁶⁵ Louis Moraud, Circular, Patuanak, 10 August 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

settlement at Patuanak, including Chief Sandypoint wrote letters to Bishop Lajeunesse and later Bishop Dumouchel asking for a new priest. The letters did not critique Moraud's strictness regarding Dene spiritual practices or attitudes against development, but rather argued that he was not fulfilling his duties as a Catholic Priest, since he was rarely in Patuanak, and requested that a new priest be sent either just for Patuanak or to replace Moraud. Furthermore, community members from Patuanak recognized Moraud's disdain towards them and were concerned that when he was in Patuanak he was rushed and dismissive of their Catholic needs. While aspects of the conflict relate to Moraud's prohibitions on drinking and a local pool hall, and his punishments of individuals who engaged in such activities, there is also a sense that he was prejudiced towards "halfbreeds." Beyond possible differing interpretations of Catholicism, where Moraud sees certain behaviours as reasons to not be allowed absolution or in church, community members note how his practices differ from other priests, such as those at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and interpret this as evidence of his bias towards them. In addition to asking for a new priest, and suggesting various interpretations of the relationship between Catholic faith and particular behaviors, the letters indicate that community members saw themselves as part of a larger Catholic community and did not see Moraud as the sole figurehead of their local church. The letters that I found were rearranged by an archivist at the Archdiocese into a thematic folder labeled "Patuanak SK, Complaints 1933-1973," and the bulk of the letters in the folder related to Moraud.⁶⁶

The earliest letter was sent in 1940 from Mrs. Ahenakew to Bishop Lajeunesse, typed in English by her husband who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. Mrs. Ahenakew contrasts her experiences going to confession in Ile-a-la-Crosse and being absolved with seeing Moraud at Easter in Patuanak. She writes, "He told me that as neither I nor my daughters were good Catholics he would not give me absolution. I have therefore not fulfilled my Easter obligations, my Lord, and I felt constrained to tell you about it."⁶⁷ She also shared that when she attended Moraud's Mass, she did not hear her own language, even though there were "fifteen other halfbreeds," explaining to the bishop, "we cannot understand this, as we feel that we are not so good that the Church should feel that we do not need any of its ministrations."⁶⁸ In 1940, Mrs. Ahenakew expected that part of the Mass would be in her language, she does not accept

⁶⁶ There may have been similar letters in other folders, but many letters from community members to Church officials from this time period were in Dene syllabics, which I cannot read.

⁶⁷ "Mrs A. Ahenakew to Rt. Rev. M Lajeunesse Lord Bishop of Keewatin," Isle a la Crosse March 25th 1940, Patuanak, SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Moraud's dismissal that she is not a good Catholic, and sees his refusal to speak her language during the Mass (which is presumably Cree or Michif) as evidence of his prejudice towards "halfbreeds." She writes, "We all know that he does not like us Halfbreed and may be our behavior deserves censure, but we are all agreed that this treatment we get from him proves it. People at Isle a la Crosse drink much more and misbehave much more than they do at Chagona but there the fathers handle them very differently."⁶⁹ Mrs. Ahenakew concludes her letter by noting that she will no longer go to confession or Mass with Father Moraud, but will continue to go to other priests.⁷⁰ For my argument here, Mrs. Ahenakew's letter is significant in demonstrating that community members were aware of some of Moraud's prejudices towards particular lifestyles and those living in town, and that they did not accept his specific definition of Catholicism that included denying absolution to those he did not deem worthy. Receiving absolution and attending Mass seem to be important to Mrs. Ahenakew, though it is unclear whether this is because of her own beliefs or perceptions within her community. The fact that she is willing to not attend confession or Mass with Moraud, suggests it is deeper than appearances. Of further significance is her indication that others share her views and the similarity between her criticisms of Moraud and those made by others in Patuanak nearly twelve years later.

While Mrs. Ahenakew did not feel the need to be deferential to Moraud, and was not afraid to write to the bishop sharing her concerns, Bishop Lajeunesse does not appear to take any action. He writes that he must hear both sides of the story and that even if Father Moraud had been wrong it would not release Mrs. Ahenakew from the obligation to go to Mass and confession.⁷¹ The bishop's response to Mrs. Ahenakew in 1940 is indicative of how he and his successor, Bishop Dumouchel, would respond to later letters. This response fits with the trend identified by Jacob Estralshenan in previous chapters of the tendency of priests, and bishops, not to believe local people.⁷² So while Mrs. Ahenakew as a member of a Catholic community was confident to take her concerns to the bishop, the lack of a response by the bishop suggests a more colonial dynamic.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin Letter to Mrs A. Ahenakew Chagona via Isle a la Crosse," Montreal, April 10th 1940, Patuanak, SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁷² See chapters one and two.

Over a decade later, between January 1952 and January 1953 a series of letters from Chief Noel Sandypoint, Alex Solomon, Thomas Wolverine, and Abraham Misponas, were sent to Bishop Lajeunesse asking that Moraud be replaced.⁷³ The letters begin with religious concerns relating to Moraud's frequent absences from Patuanak and their negative consequences on the community in terms of people not receiving the last rites, weddings being delayed, and missing Mass on Christmas morning. Like the earlier letter of Mrs. Ahenakew, they raise the issue of people not going to confession because of Father Moraud, as well as his prejudice towards "halfbreeds" and the local pool hall owned by Abraham Misponas. A letter signed by Sandypoint, Solomon, and Misponas reads: "especially for the halfbreed Indians he sure hates them nobody ever go to confession them Indians because Father hates them."⁷⁴ They conclude the letter by indicating they would send a list of names of all those who "want to vote for to get another priest here as soon as possible."⁷⁵ The authors of the letter are not deferentially asking their bishop for a new priest they are demanding one, after a community vote. It is not simply Moraud's stance on pool halls or drinking, but his absences from Patuanak and local people's feeling that Father Moraud hates the "halfbreeds," an assessment that in some ways fits with Moraud's own writings about his preference of communities like Dipper Lake over Patuanak where he sees Catholicism being corrupted by town life and modernity.

The following December, Chief Noel Sandypoint sent a second letter to Bishop Lajeunesse responding to an incident that took place over Christmas when Father Moraud left Patuanak at five in the morning for Primeau without conducting Mass first. The chief writes:

As you know you heard about Father Moraud before. Like this morning what he did we did not like it at all. There was lots of people come in for the big feast Christmas. There was a few people come in from Cree Lake and he went anyway like that on Saturday to where there was no people on Primeau Lake. That shows us that he doesn't like us at all and he went away before mass he left about 5 o'clock in the morning. That shows us he does not like his peoples and so do the peoples. You can even send him away we would not mind it because he done that to us lots of times. The people told you about him lots of time. But you would not listen to us And when you see him he tells you what he acts and you take his

⁷³ These letters were each hand written in English.

⁷⁴ "Alex Solomon, Noel Sandypoint, and Abraham Misponas, Letter to Bishop Lajeunesse, The Pas" January 5th 1952, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

words. That's about all I can say. We pray for you. I am the Chief, Noel Sandypoint⁷⁶

Chief Sandypoint's letter illustrates the volume of complaints that were made about Moraud, and the consistent refusal of the bishop to respond.⁷⁷ Sandypoint expresses concern over the missed Mass as well as the sense that Moraud does not care for the people at Patuanak. In addition to not being deferential to Moraud, Sandypoint is not deferential to the bishop, though he remains respectful. He admonishes Lajeunesse for believing Moraud over what the people of Patuanak have been telling the bishop. Similar to Willow Heart and Jacob Estralshenan, Chief Sandypoint notes the bishop's hypocrisy, while noting that the community prays for him. Additional letters were sent from Abraham Misponas and Thomas Wolverine in January of 1953 about Moraud missing Christmas Mass. Abraham Misponas reiterated Chief Sandypoint's concerns about Christmas Mass and the local sense that Father Moraud did not like the people at Patuanak. He also shared concerns about community members not receiving the last rites because of Moraud's prolonged absences, writing, "Just a few time to let you know, when father did to us here at Patuanak. Hes to always the same again. One woman died here again and he didn't see father. That's father is not here. When he was very very sick. Father was gone just the same. That why we have father here to look about the people here but he never stay with us here."⁷⁸ Again, the critique here is that Moraud was not properly looking after his Catholic community.

The final letter asking that Moraud be replaced was sent in 1958 to Bishop Dumouchel from Thomas Wolverine. This letter was sent after the meeting between community members and Dumouchel that Moraud reflected on in his 1963 circular. Even though Dumouchel threatened that the people of Patuanak could either keep Moraud or not have a priest, Wolverine does not accept the bishop's answer. Like the earlier letters, his is one that illustrates Catholic faith as well as a willingness to challenge Church authority. Wolverine writes:

I would like to mention is June last year we had a meeting when you were here, and the reason why, we had a meeting was this. We wanted to have a priest with us here its too long without a priest here now its 2 full months now. So if you cant

⁷⁶ "Noel Sandypoint letter to His Excellency Bishop M Lajeunesse," December 27th 1952, Patuanak SK, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁷⁷ Bishop Lajeunesse responded to Abraham Misponas's letter and asked him to share his response with Noel Sandypoint and Thomas (who I interpret to be Thomas Wolverine). See "M. Lajeunesse, Vicar-Apostolic of Keewatin letter to Mr. Abraham Misponas," January 27th 1953, Le Pas Manitoba, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁷⁸ English pronouns are often confused by Dene and Cree speakers. "Abraham Misponas letter to Rev. Bis. Martin L." January 14th 1953, Patuanak SK. Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

have a priest for us, as we told you last year you can sent Father Moraud out of here and we'll get somebody else here cause I think Catholic religion is all one money question. You said it was not a money question; but I think it is.⁷⁹

This letter suggests a distinction for Thomas Wolverine between his Catholic faith, since he wants a permanent priest in Patuanak, and what he terms “Catholic religion” that I read as the institution of the Church, which he thinks is primarily concerned with money rather than the faith or well being of the people of Patuanak. Wolverine does not defer to Moraud or the bishop. He is primarily concerned with having a regular priest in Patuanak that is not Moraud, even though by 1958 some community members believed that Moraud had performed miracles in the region.

Taken together, these letters illustrate a long-term conflict between Moraud and local people in Patuanak that included a perception that he was not available to meet the Catholic needs of his parishioners. Here, the model of a missionary priest constantly travelling between satellite missions that Moraud is more recently praised for is a point of critique as two months was considered too long to be without a priest. Over the course of nearly two decades individuals shared these concerns with their bishops, and critique them for not listening. Although these letters only represent five individuals, they make note of others in the community with similar concerns. Chief Sandypoint in emphasizing his role as chief arguably writes on behalf of his community, rather than just himself. Furthermore, language and writing barriers make the volume of letters that I was able to find and access (because they were in English rather than Dene syllabics) significant for the time period. These letters do not simply suggest lone individuals angry about Moraud’s stance towards alcohol or pool halls, but that some community members understood their Catholic faith differently than Moraud and the bishops. In some ways, they were advocating for a Catholicism that was less rigid regarding absolution, more forgiving, made space for Dene as well as Cree, and placed more of an emphasis on pastoral care. They want a priest who is available and who loves them, and have not found that in Father Moraud. Because Catholic faith and deference are not equivocal, these community members repeatedly share their concerns about Moraud and ask that he be replaced. Fundamentally, these letters suggest how people in Patuanak saw themselves as part of a broader Catholic community, even though that community did not always acknowledge them. The critiques of Moraud are of Catholic parishioners writing to their bishops about concerns with a local priest that has affected

⁷⁹ “Thomas Wolverine letter to His Excellency Bishop P Dumouchel,” June 15th 1958, Patuanak SK, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

their Catholic wellbeing, demonstrating their positionality as members of a Catholic community and the significance of Catholic faith to Elders who were critical of Moraud. The Catholic faith of Mrs. Ahenakew, Noel Sandypoint, Abraham Misponas, Alex Solomon, and Thomas Wolverine does not include deference to Church officials, and in this way differs from the Catholicism of some more recent Elders.

The sense that Moraud hated the people of Patuanak and that he was hated in return, as well as consistent efforts to have him replaced is missing in more recent historical consciousness. The individuals writing about Father Moraud passed away before my first trip to Patuanak, but I have worked with some of their children and grandchildren. Chief Sandypoint was the father of Elder Mary Lariviere who I interviewed three times, and the brother-in-law of Sarazine Ratt. Mary was adamant about Father Moraud's sainthood and made no mention of efforts to have him replaced. Similarly Mrs. Ratt focused on stories of Father Moraud's miracles as well as the work that she did for him cleaning and cooking. I informally asked some of Thomas Wolverine's grandchildren about his letters asking for Moraud to be replaced, and they were not aware that community members tried to replace Moraud, never mind that their grandfather had written letters to the bishop about the issue. My interpretation of the letters is that they were expressing more widely shared beliefs about Moraud, and that they were not being written in secret. Why then, has this aspect of Moraud's history in Patuanak not been incorporated into more recent historical consciousness? Stories of trying to replace Moraud fit with neither narratives that focus on his sainthood nor those by Ralph Paul and Frank McIntyre that focus on his stance against development and strict Catholic teachings, rather than his many absences and prejudices towards those residing in Patuanak. Perhaps after Moraud's death, these stories were not passed on out of respect and to avoid confrontation, or because of changes within the community geographically as Patuanak became the primary, and later only permanent settlement. A central part of critiques was all of the time that Moraud was spending in places like Primeau Lake. Some of the people I interviewed who praised Moraud were from Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, and Primeau Lake, so may have had different perspectives of his travels. As multiple communities have become one it is possible that a particular narrative of Moraud that was originally a Primeau or Dipper narrative, has become the Patuanak story of Father Moraud. It is also possible that stories of Moraud as a saint have helped to bring these previously separate communities together and establish a unique local historical consciousness. Given that I did speak to people connected to the men who wrote

the letters there may be generational differences in how Moraud has been understood – between those who knew Moraud as children, taking catechism from him, and those who interacted with him only as adults. Mrs. Ratt was of the same generation as Noel Sandypoint. Her different relationship with Moraud when he was alive, as well as for fifty years after his death as a saint that she has prayed to, may have caused her to focus on different stories.

Father Moraud may have changed between 1958 and his death in 1965. Thomas Wolverine's grandson, Ovide Wolverine noted that because he mostly knew Father Moraud when Moraud was older the priest had softened some of his views, such as those towards fiddle music. Ovide had commented that Father Moraud liked the country singer Buck Owens who he (Moraud) had seen perform in Chicago. I followed up by asking if Moraud liked country music, and Ovide clarified:

Well, he didn't like it but as he was getting older he didn't kind of mind... We spent a lot of time with him and we used to listen to country music, that's where he told us that he had seen Buck Owens in Chicago, oh he says 'I had been to Chicago, and seen Buck Owens, Oh, he's a very good singer' [mimics Moraud's accent, laughter]... Yeah, but I guess he had to see for himself you know, these modern days are coming.⁸⁰

Ovide describes a different personal relationship with Moraud than that outlined by Ralph Paul in his memoirs, raising questions about how aging may have affected the priest. Ovide was aware that Moraud was seen as strict, and tended to view his (Moraud's) way as the only way resulting in conflict with local people. Nonetheless, his own experiences with the priest led him to believe that Moraud was more open to change at the end of his life. Ovide did not mention his grandfather Thomas Wolverine's efforts to have Father Moraud replaced.

In a circular dated November 5th 1963, Moraud includes a recounting of providing assistance to a woman at Cree Lake. In this story Moraud was able to help a woman whom medical professionals had previously hospitalized, suggesting the entanglement between Moraud's spiritual power and other services he provided to the people of the northwest, and how that spiritual power would have augmented his authority in the region. He writes:

The last Sunday, I pass to Cree Lake. It happen a great excitement in the camp. Mary, a woman, from Stoney Rapids, married with an indian from Portage La Loche. That Mary had made already two stages at the mental hospital, of North Battleford. Sunday morning, she dessapear. Alfred her husband, thinking that Mary was in one or other of the tents. He went in each tent: no Mary.

⁸⁰ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

Immediately, two boys, started with canoe, to search Mary. They pass all the time of the mass, looking for Mary. They came at noon: no Mary. After noon, all the men and the lads, started again. They arrived, after the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This time, they had found Mary. A man came to me, and asked me, to go on the shore: Mary was so excited, so frighten. Four men, had wrapt her, in a canvas and hold her very strongly. I told them: leave her alone”. First, they didn’t wanted, to leave her. I took the hand of Mary, and I told her: come on. Mary and walk. She walked, peacefully. The holders of Mary was very surprised to see Mary, not excited and walking. First those, were as excited as Mary. I brought Mary in the chapel. I told her: dip your hand, in the holy water, and make your sign of the cross. After I told her: kneel down, and recite the “Hail Mary” with me. She was, like a person reasonable. Alfred brought her in his tent.⁸¹

In his recounting, Moraud is the local authority who is turned to in a time of crises. His ability to calm Mary with his hand and voice contrasts with the violence of the men who had restrained her. He is then able to cure her using holy water and having her recite Hail Marys. I have not heard this story from any of the local people that I have worked with, though it could easily fit with stories of Moraud’s miracles and sainthood that are shared. It is also an indication from Moraud’s lifetime, of the use of faith, holy water, and prayer for healing, practices that have continued after Moraud’s death. More generally, the story of helping Mary fits with stories of Moraud providing assistance to women, and suggests what might be meant when community members like Bernie comment on his role as a doctor in the region. Perhaps Moraud’s assistance during times of crisis outweighed his absences, authoritarianism, and prejudice at the end of his life.

Moraud often apologizes for his lack of miracles and marvels in the conclusion to his circular letters. Even after sharing the story of assisting Mary at Cree Lake, which could be read as a miracle type of story, Moraud concludes; “Excuse my letter. As you see, I have no marvels, to relate to you. I thank you, for all you did, for me and for my missions.”⁸² In one of his last circulars before his passing Moraud writes of miracles again, and his hope for “his Indians” to make good Christian lives. He writes, “I didn’t make any miracle, the miracle, I would be glad, if my Indians made a Christian life. But till now, they are the same. No change. I pray for you Dear Good friends I thank you for all you did for me and for my missions.”⁸³ Miracles are a part of the

⁸¹ Louis Moraud, Circular, Dipper Lake, 5 November 1963, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives. The quotation is taken from the first half of the letter that is undated.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 7 March 1965, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

faith that Moraud wrote about in his circulars. His final wish for “his Indians,” is paternalistic, and suggests Moraud’s dissatisfaction with the beliefs and practices of the people he spent his life with. Ironically, fifty years after his death, the people of Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse identify Moraud as a saint to whom they pray and credit him with being responsible for their strong Catholic faith.

Father Moraud died on July 30th 1965 in the Ile-a-la-Crosse hospital. Agnes Gardiner spoke of taking her children to see him in his coffin in the convent before his body was taken back to Patuanak. When I asked her if she had any memories of when Father Moraud passed away, she laughed and shared that her young children had mistaken him for Jesus: “They keep him there, there, in his coffin. Seen Jesus there, and I took them, ... not very big, Shirley went there. Didn’t want to come home, was crying, ‘I want to stay with Jesus.’”⁸⁴ Agnes shared that she took her children back to see Father Moraud, because they were insistent on staying with “Jesus.” Moraud’s body was then returned to Patuanak, as Agnes described, “His body was then taken by boat to Patuanak. They took him then in a canoe, they took him to Patuanak the body, I don’t know how many.”⁸⁵

Moraud’s death was a memorable event in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. Agnes’ daughter Shirley said she was too young to remember, since she was only four, but that some of her older friends remember when Father Moraud died. In Patuanak, even though she was only ten or eleven, Bernie remembers when Father Moraud died, commenting, “I think he died when I was about ten or eleven, I remember.”⁸⁶ Those who were older mourned Father Moraud. Mary Lariviere, the daughter of Noel Sandypoint, who was born at Knee Lake in 1929, shared that the wake for Father Moraud at his church in Patuanak went all night, and that “people just kept going, singing Dene—the rosary.”⁸⁷ She described sadness at Father Moraud’s passing, explaining that when they “buried Father Moraud here, the Elders were just crying, all crying, they loved him and missed him.”⁸⁸ It is possible that the Elders Mary referred to included individuals like her father Noel Sandypoint as well as Alex Solomon, Abraham Misponas, and Thomas Wolverine. I interviewed Mary three times, once with her nephew Patrick D’Jonaire

⁸⁴ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁸⁷ Mary Lariviere, Interview with Amanda Fehr, translated by Patrick D’Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

acting as a translator, a second time without a translator, and a third time with Margaret McIntyre acting as a translator. To Mary, there is no question about Father Moraud being a saint, he simply is one, and she continues to pray to him. In our first meeting, her nephew explained that she was a strong lady with a lot of faith, because she had a lot of tragedy in her life. Patrick explained, “Auntie went through really rough life lost most of her children because of accidents. Her oldest daughter got killed, traveling skidoo and sleigh ongoing vehicle. Her daughter and granddaughter died that time. Her daughter got murdered 1981. Oldest daughter died because of cancer. Went through lots because of that her memory is not too good, but she’s a strong lady.”⁸⁹

At the fiftieth anniversary of Father Moraud’s passing and pilgrimage, a pamphlet was created by the English River First Nation that included the following excerpt about Father Moraud’s funeral, burial, and the affect it had on his parishioners: “A funeral service was sung at Ile-a-la-Crosse, August 2, and that evening his body was taken by the Montagnais to Patuanak, his mission to be buried. What faith was shown by his dear Indians. During the entire night they came to the church to pray and sing. Such fervor has never been shown in Patuanak. This was the consequence of Father’s influence through his teaching.”⁹⁰ Unlike Mary’s recounting, this description attributes the community’s response to Moraud’s passing entirely to Moraud, rather than to local agency and mourning. In other places Moraud’s flock is described as children, and Moraud’s mission as epic, replicating and magnifying the tone of Moraud’s own circulars. However, this description was also selected by English River for the fiftieth anniversary of the pilgrimage they hold in Father Moraud’s honour. The pamphlet concludes with: “Future generations will know that Father Moraud was the shepherd of this mission during 50 years. The monument that will be placed over his tomb will remind the Indians what they have received from him.”⁹¹ The paternalism apparent in the quotation reflects the colonial relationship that was a part of Moraud’s mission in the mid-twentieth century. Its reprinting by the English River First Nation in 2015 emphasizes the sincere Catholic faith and agency of many in the region as well as their mourning of Father Moraud. While Moraud accepted his fate to live and die in Patuanak, community members have chosen to recognize him as their saint despite having had complicated and at times troubling relationships with the missionary priest during his life.

⁸⁹ Mary Lariviere, 25 June 2013.

⁹⁰ Father Moraud pamphlet, 50th Anniversary Pilgrimage. English River First Nation. Copy courtesy of Monique Bouvier.

⁹¹ Ibid.

In this chapter, I have drawn on Moraud's own circulars, a selection of letters from community members asking that Moraud be replaced, as well as local accounts to provide a discussion of his work in the region, as a colonial agent, an absent missionary with prejudices towards the people of Patuanak, and a spiritually powerful and respected priest. Here I have considered the particular type of Catholicism Moraud taught, his strictness, the varying roles he played in his mission, his separation from the congregation he served, as well as local resistance to some of Moraud's edicts and to his absences suggesting that even though Moraud equated Catholic faith with deference, many Elders during his life did not. Moraud's positionality as an insider and outsider, saint and absent priest, and authoritarian colonial agent and individual who people were not afraid to laugh at or to challenge, seems rife with contradictions and complicates how colonialism, Catholicism, and Indigeneity during the early and mid-twentieth century might be understood. The seeming disconnect between more recent historical consciousness and efforts to have Moraud replaced, indicate variation in how local Indigenous people have understood their Catholic faith and roles within a Catholic community, as well as changes to that community geographically and across generations. It also shows how more recent historical consciousness works to simplify the Moraud story, making him either a saint or a colonial agent, but not a saint and a rejected priest who neglected the needs of his people. Efforts to have Moraud replaced and efforts to recognize him as a saint, both exhibit the local agency of a Catholic community.

Chapter Five

The strongest critiques of Father Moraud by Indigenous people occurred during his life, critiques that are generally absent in more recent historical consciousness. Community members in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Cross often reinterpret Moraud's strictness as protecting local Indigeneity or Catholic ideals. Whether individuals identify Moraud as a saint or not, the stories of his miracles are unique aspects of local historical consciousness and Moraud himself is seen as an exceptional priest. Although when he was alive people in the settlement at Patuanak wanted him replaced because he was not meeting the Catholic needs of the community, more recent critiques have tended to focus on his authoritarian stance over lifestyles and community development. This chapter more specifically considers stories of Moraud's miracles as well as trends in local historical consciousness to suggest the different ways that local people negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity because of varying positionalities and life histories. There are four stories that are typically shared by community members as examples of Moraud's miracles, as well as more general accounts of healing and the annual pilgrimage in his name. These stories of a spiritually powerful priest complicate discussions in the previous chapter of one who was not seen to be meeting the Catholic needs of all of his parishioners. In considering local historical consciousness I also consider the more critical understandings of Frank McIntyre and Ralph Paul, before outlining how understandings of Moraud tend to be shaped by nostalgia, a sense that he protected the community, and the varying life histories and perspectives of community members regarding the Church. Local historical consciousness tends to interpret Moraud through either a Catholic lens, focusing on his sainthood as well as his strictness, or through the lens of a more narrow definition of Indigeneity that either critiques Moraud for banning Dene traditions and development, or praises him for protecting Dene language and socio-economic traditions without focusing on the Catholic aspects of his work in the region.

Central to stories of Father Moraud are four examples of his miracles, witnessed by individuals themselves or by friends and family members: surviving his canoe going over the Dipper Rapids, walking across a recently frozen Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse, preventing the explosion of a gas/propane tank in a fire, and conducting an exorcism. These miracle stories are often the focus of narratives about Father Moraud, and are provided as evidence of Moraud's sainthood, or as stories unique to Patuanak. Generally the chronology of Moraud's miracles is unclear, but archival documents suggest that he went over the Dipper Rapids in 1951 and that he walked

across a recently frozen Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1954. Most people do not focus on chronology in their recountings, but it is clear from the archival record that some people understood these events as miracles while Moraud was alive and that these events took place at the same time that letters were being written asking for his replacement. In addition to the four stories that I have heard from community members there are more sporadic references to his ability to predict the future and to healing generally.

When I cautiously asked Elders Mary Lariviere and Grandma Sarazine Ratt about Father Moraud being considered a saint, they replied he is a saint, in a tone that seemed to correct my phrasing of the question.¹ This belief is widely shared by other Elders and community members. According to Ralph Paul, even the school in Patuanak is named after Father Moraud, and is called Saint Louis School.² People leave water over Moraud's grave to make holy water. Sand from his grave is placed under pillows or rubbed onto body parts that are in pain.³ Even those who have "moved away from the Church" keep pictures of Moraud in their homes and vehicles and have suggested family members pray to Father Moraud when they are feeling uncertain or for healing.⁴ This respect for Father Moraud goes beyond those who are identified as "diehard" or "hardcore" Catholics.⁵

If you were to enter into an Elder's home, you would likely find pictures of Father Moraud, often wearing his black robe in the bush, but sometimes laying in his coffin. One of my friends in Patuanak tells the story of a health worker (from outside the community) coming into her home and asking about her pictures of Father Moraud. She responded by saying that the man was her grandfather who was a very important man in the community. After spending a few days in the community, and commenting to my friend how many people had pictures of her grandfather on their walls and in vehicles, she finally let him in on the joke.⁶ The man was not her grandfather, but Father Moraud. This story illustrates the significance of local knowledge

¹ Sarazine Ratt and Matilda Lariviere, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 12 November 2014; Mary Lariviere, Interview with Amanda Fehr, translated by Patrick D'Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013. Mary Lariviere, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River Dene Nation, 12 February 2014.

² Ralph Paul wrote that the school was named after Father Moraud. See Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 11

³ Sarazine Ratt and Matilda Lariviere, 12 November 2014.

⁴ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁵ Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014. Bernie describes her mother, Christine George as a "die hard" Catholic. I provide a more detailed discussion of this in chapter two. See also my introduction to Bernie and our interview in Appendix A.

⁶ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

and authority in the recognition of Father Moraud as a local saint. Even though he was an oblate missionary who exerted power and authority over the people who now primarily reside in Patuanak, it is they who claim him as their local saint and who chose to share (or not share) stories about him.

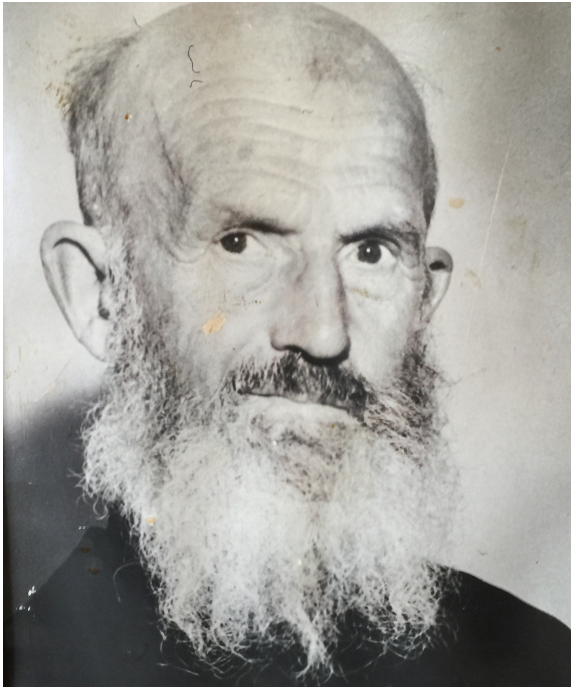


Figure 5.1: Father Moraud, Photo courtesy of Evon McIntyre.

The majority of people I spoke with did not identify any form of official Church recognition with their belief that Moraud was a saint.⁷ Rather, they themselves or family members had witnessed what they understand to be Moraud's miracles. Miracles here are unexplained occurrences that are attributed to Moraud's spiritual power and faith. Local belief in Moraud's sainthood is then grounded in local experience rather than Papal authority. The Archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas is careful to refer to Father Moraud as a beloved and dedicated missionary, enabling priests and even archbishops to participate in the annual Father Moraud pilgrimage, which they see as an opportunity for prayer and Catholic teachings.⁸ In this way, the

⁷ Leonie Durocher and Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁸ Prior to attending the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Father Moraud pilgrimage, Archbishop Peter Sutton expressed concern about how the pilgrimage had been represented in recent years, I interpret this as being a concern that the pilgrimage was about Father Moraud as a local saint, rather than as a missionary. The archbishop asks the organizers to, "take a fresh look at what is undertaken by the Church or in the name of the Church." He goes on to

Archdiocese and local people have different interpretations of Moraud's sainthood without conflict. Local people do not require official Church recognition of Moraud's sainthood, but neither is their recognition of Moraud an act of going against the Church. Beyond this, stories of Father Moraud are part of the local storytelling and historical consciousness in the northwest. When I asked Duane Favel, the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse if he heard stories of Father Moraud when he was growing up, he answered "oh yeah, certainly people refer to him as a saint so in terms of some of the things that he did. So yeah."⁹ Stories of Father Moraud's miracles are physically grounded in the territory of the Dene, Cree, and Metis around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse and the Churchill River.

The first story I heard about Father Moraud, and the one I have heard the most often in both Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse, was about when he walked across Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse with twelve young men. I later learned that the lake was frozen, but that it had only been frozen for a couple of hours. Depending on the teller, the amount of apparent biblical Christ allusions can increase or decrease. In several retellings, Father Moraud instructed the young men not to look back. In others, holding his prayer book to lead them in prayer as they crossed the ice. In some, one of the last young men to cross looks back, and falls through the ice just as they reach the shore. The number of men also varies by teller from six to twelve apostles. Other versions include details about what was happening on shore – the concern of witnesses around Ile-a-la-Crosse and disapproval of the other missionaries. For example, in the *Voice of the Elders* collection, Louise Dawatsare from Patuanak explains, "The ice was not even thick and he walked right across on thin ice. There was some people following him and they were all praying. He was holding the Bible and walking across the lake on thin ice. When they got close to the shore he said now I will let you go and they fell into the water. But it wasn't deep because it was right near the shore."¹⁰

clarify his view of the pilgrimage, a view that does not include Moraud's position in local understandings as a saint. He writes: "It is certainly a wonderful opportunity in terms of religious education/catechism and an opportunity to do some good teaching in the faith context. Practically all of the people who attend the pilgrimage, I understand, are from Patuanak and our Catholic communities. If there is a significant number of people who do not belong to our Church, then I do want to raise the question as to what is said to them and how they are accommodated in our celebrations and how they view the invitation to attend." See, "Archbishop Peter Sutton letter to Organizers, c/o Fr. Megret Concerning the Patuanak Pilgrimage." Keewatin – Le Pas July 5 1990, Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁹ Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

¹⁰ "Louise Dewatsare," *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p 112.

Born and raised in Ile-a-la-Crosse, but living in Patuanak in 2006, Joe Roy's recounting of the story in the same collection notes the concern of people from Patuanak when Moraud began to walk across the ice, and uses the story as a call to pray to Father Moraud for help:

There were a lot of people in Patuanak when Father Moraud came across from the Big Island to Ile a la Crosse. They tried calling him back. But he said, no don't listen. You won't go through the ice if you will come with me. A lot of old ladies went home crying. They did not want Father Moraud to come through the ice...But he came across the ice. Father Moraud is a saint and did lots of miracles. Go to his graveyard and ask him to help you. He will pray for us too.¹¹

Agnes Gardiner drew attention to the parallels between Moraud's twelve young men and the twelve apostles, suggesting that Moraud purposefully selected twelve. In response to my question, "do you remember the story of him crossing the lake?" Agnes answered:

I forgot that one. He came walking on the water huh, like it was the twelve apostles. The fall, just freeze the lake, but still moving. One or two of them someplace there, Big Island. He took them from here those guys, now he make twelve. Twelve apostles Jesus had, and he need two and he saw those trappers two of them. And he scared those trappers two of them. He said "don't be scared, walk Jesus," and he came, oh, by all of them the people were standing outside. Father Amyot ah, said that 'Father is crazy to come walking'...My God, twelve apostles he make uh and walked like Jesus and apostles. But they gotta walk. Nobody went in the water, nobody. Only down at the lake, there's a beach now, a little bit. Nobody went. They went to church all of them. To church he took them, all his twelve apostles after...walk on the water, huh, he knew how to walk on the water [unclear]. Being a saint huh. Forty-nine years now since he passed away, this year.¹²

As in her discussion of Moraud's death, Agnes compares Father Moraud to Jesus several times in her recounting of the crossing the lake story—to Agnes, Father Moraud knew how to walk on water. She was also one of the only individuals I spoke with to discuss the critical reception Moraud received from the missionaries at Ile-a-la-Crosse upon arriving, or the fact that afterwards he took his twelve apostles to church. In 2006 when I first visited Ile-a-la-Crosse, Gilbert McCallum, known as the Sarge, was known locally as one of the men who had crossed the lake with Father Moraud. The story of crossing the lake became a significant story in Ile-a-la-Crosse for the men who crossed the lake with Father Moraud. Now that those men have passed away, the story continues to be told as an example of Moraud's sainthood. Even though Agnes

¹¹ "Joe Roy," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 156.

¹² Agnes Gardiner, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 19 June 2014. See Appendix A for more information about Agnes and our work together.

remembered the story and knew details that I had not heard before, she needed some prompting to tell it.

Similarly, the names and stories of the men who crossed the lake with Moraud are being forgotten with the passing of those individuals and immediate family members who knew of their involvement. Individuals I spoke with tended to only remember the names of one of the men, often a relative. Eliza Aubichon (nee Daigneault), is an Elder who I have spent quite a bit of time with in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Saskatoon, and is one of the few Elders with whom I have had what could be considered sustained conversations.¹³ At the end of one of our first formal interviews, Eliza shared the story of Father Moraud crossing the lake. Her telling was prompted by a discussion of the Grotto to the Virgin Mary on the beach across from the church, that she associates with Moraud's crossing the lake. In her description there were six men and they were told not to look down. She explained: "He made it across. Even one of my brothers was there. Vincent was with him. They must have felt really good when they hit the ground heh? Maybe they were holding their breath, my God. But they didn't have to have no doubts about it. They were going to make it. And they did."¹⁴ Eliza explained that her brother was not worried about the crossing, as he was the second man after Father Moraud. Like others, Eliza's purpose in sharing the story was to illustrate Moraud's sainthood, but it also showcases the belief of the men who followed him.

Jim Durocher, a local Metis politician who was involved in the community takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Church in the 1970s, shared a story of his dad crossing the lake with Father Moraud. I had previously interviewed Jim about his involvement in Metis politics, and conflicts with the Church, and did not ask him about Moraud or his faith.¹⁵ A separate interview in his home with his wife Leonie, who was at that time in treatment for cancer, provided a space for a deeper discussion about faith. Jim's retelling focused on his father's faith, and the differences in his own religious views. He explained, "You know I'd have never made it, because if he had said don't look back, I would have looked back (laughter)."¹⁶ In response to my question, "but your dad made it?" Jim answered, "Oh yeah, my dad yeah, he was a very religious

¹³ Eliza Aubichon's husband was from Patuanak. She is grandma Sarazine Ratt's sister in law. For more information about Eliza and my work with her, see Appendix A.

¹⁴ Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012.

¹⁵ A deeper discussion of Jim's involvement in the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and his faith will be discussed in chapters six and seven. For more information about Jim see Appendix A.

¹⁶ Leonie Durocher and Jim Durocher, 16 October 2012.

man. I'm not saying I'm not religious, I just like to ask questions."¹⁷ Jim's response to my question suggests his perception of the un-questioning deference of his dad to Church authorities contrasting with his own independent approach to religion. The equation of faith with deference to Church authorities fits with Moraud's views of faith discussed in the previous chapter, and is more generally a point of contention between community members (and different generations). There is continuity in local people identifying as Catholic, but varying understandings of what that means, particularly as it relates to Church authority.

Jim also emphasized, in the context of a conversation that involved his wife, that he is religious. Later in our conversation Jim clarified that his dad had only shared the story with Jim and his siblings a couple of times, and that one of those times was when someone from The Pas came to interview him about it.¹⁸ Jim did not position Moraud as a saint; rather it was members of the Catholic Church from the south—outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse—who “were thinking that he might have been a saint,” so came to gather information from local people.¹⁹ Jim remembered four of the men who crossed the lake being interviewed, but other than his dad and Kenny Ahenakew, did not recall their names. In this way, Jim's retelling indicates a shifting historical consciousness. He is familiar with the story, but does not identify with the type of faith that it involved. It was a story that he heard from his dad, but that was most memorable because of the efforts of Church officials to confirm if Moraud was a saint. Jim's generation remembers the names of direct family members involved, but struggles to recall all of the men who crossed the lake.

Crossing the lake was the only miraculous story that I found Moraud reference in his circulars. In a letter dated the 30th of November 1954 from Ile-a-la-Crosse, Moraud shares this story with his readers:

I am obliged to wait, till the lake is frozen, and the ice tchick [thick] enough, to walk on. I do not want to drive into the water, at this time of the season. We do not make miracles when we want, and as we want. The Indians and the Half Breeds,

¹⁷ Leonie Durocher and Jim Durocher, 16 October 2012.

¹⁸ Current Chief of English River Lawrence McIntyre provided guidance for my project in his earlier role working for the Band Manager for English River First Nation. Lawrence helped me to connect with people to interview and informally shared his knowledge about his community's history with me (these were not recorded interviews, but I was instructed to take notes). Lawrence suggested that there was an official Church investigation into Moraud's sainthood. I was not able to corroborate that using Church records, as those types of investigations are not open to the public. To date, Moraud's miracles have not been officially recognized by the Church. As noted earlier, Elders I spoke with did not seem concerned with official recognition as to them Moraud is a saint. Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

¹⁹ Leonie Durocher and Jim Durocher, 16 October 2012.

have the impression, that I make miracles. One fall, in the morning some people went across the lake, in a motor boat. In the afternoon, the people from the point, saw us, walking across on the ice. Watching at us, and saying one to another: "If the little priest", was not with them, they certainly would go through the ice. The tale had been so lengthened, as to report, that I held four stout lads, in my arms. According to the legend, I would have said to them, on nearing the shore: "Now, I will drop you". And immediately they all went through the ice; I was the only one, who would not even have soaked his feet."²⁰

Moraud is retelling this story more than a decade before his passing, offering some chronology to the miracle stories, as well as the insight that he was aware that the Dene and Metis in the region thought he was capable of performing miracles. While on the one hand Moraud seems critical of how the story was exaggerated within his own life, the facts of crossing the lake on recently frozen ice in the fall remain the same. I read Moraud's recounting as exemplifying the agency of local people in interpreting the event as a miracle. They are not simply accepting Moraud's interpretation, but understanding the event according to their own faith and understanding of what constitutes a miracle, which Moraud implies differs from his own understandings. Moraud's recounting fits with the version of the story shared by Louise Dawatsare. Joe Roy's recounting differs in the addition of concerned people from Patuanak who were fearful of Moraud's decision to cross, and in using the story to set up Moraud as a saint. Similarly, Agnes' story differs in her emphasis on the twelve apostles, comparisons to Jesus, disapproval from the priest in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and again, Moraud's sainthood. The timeline for Moraud crossing the lake indicates that local people told stories of his miracles while petitioning Bishop Dumouchel for a new priest, indicating that more than his capacity to perform miracles and perceived sainthood caused the shift in historical consciousness. As I have suggested in the previous chapter this could be due to the movement from satellite communities to Patuanak and the creation of a new historical consciousness for that community, generational differences, as well as Moraud's shifting role in the community later in life and after his death.

When I began interviewing community members in Patuanak about Father Moraud, I quickly learned the story of Moraud going over the Dipper Rapids, often called the Drum Rapids, while hauling lumber to build a church at Dipper Lake. Archival documents suggest that this

²⁰ Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 30 November 1954, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives.

event occurred in 1951.²¹ This story does not seem to be as widely told in Ile-a-la-Crosse, though Agnes Gardiner who grew up at Halfway Lake shared this story with me.²² Like the story of crossing the lake, this is a miracle connected to the local landscape where Moraud's actions and survival contradict local knowledge. In this way, community members tend to emphasize that no one went down the Dipper Rapids. For example, Jacob Estralshenan shared, "Just like down at Dipper Rapids, Drum. Nobody ever went down, he went down, but the current took that canoe, it was so strong. Father Moraud was standing in the boat. He had a load of lumber, twenty-two foot canoe. Nothing happened to him and that rapids, it's funny, did a lot of miracles that priest."²³ In the *Voice of the Elders* collection, Philip Wolverine describes this story in more detail:

As far as I can remember Father Moraud brought some boards to Dipper Lake in a boat. There were two people that went with him. There was no trail there then. The river was very strong and it was hard to get up the river and he couldn't stop the boat. Those guys jumped out and he was going to grab the rope but he missed it. The boat went down the river with the boards and Father Moraud in it. There was only one little motor that was in the boat that fell out of the boat. That was the only thing that got lost. Everything went through that part of the river with no problem. No one ever went through that part of the river before except Father Moraud and all those boards. That was something strange that something like that would happen without losing anything. I still think of it as a miracle. In the wintertime they brought some boards on the caterpillar to Dipper Lake. They built a church up there."²⁴

Here, Moraud going over the rapids was an accident, but his survival, and that of all but the motor, is still understood as a miracle.

In other retellings in the 2006 MLTC collection Moraud makes the shape of a cross with his body as he goes over the rapids, or is praying, resulting in his survival. In this manner Louise Dawatsare described, "He was standing with his hands spread out like a cross when he went across those rapids and he never fell in. Nothing happened to him and he went across those rapids without falling in. That's something strange that I've never seen happen until today. I think of it

²¹ Louis Moraud, Circular, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 30 November 1954, McGill-Moraud Correspondence, Glenbow Archives; See also, "Fr. Louis Moraud, OMI Details of His Missionary Life," Notes taken from the Dictionary of Biographies of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada; vol. II p. 401 & from the Keewatin Newsletters. Translated by Sr. Rose Arsenaault, RSR, Chancellor November 21, 1991. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

²² Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

²³ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013. Similarly Agnes Gardiner emphasized in her retelling of the story, "that's a rapid that nobody ever goes in a canoe." Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

²⁴ "Philip Wolverine," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 168.

as a miracle.”²⁵ Similarly, Rose Campbell shared in the same collection, “He was making the sign of the cross and he was praying and that’s how he made it. He had his clothes, his groceries and his blankets in the boat. The people were so proud of the priest. The priest prayed for everybody. People used to pray a lot but nowadays it seems like nobody is praying. We said our rosaries everyday and asked God to help us to give us a good life.”²⁶ In these retellings it is not simply Moraud’s survival but the symbolism of the cross and his prayers as a model for community members. In Rose’s recounting the people were proud of the priest – not fearful or threatened by his strictness, but proud of his spiritual power. Rose contrasts Moraud praying for everyone and the prayers of her own generation with what she sees as a decline in prayer in 2006. A narrative of Moraud related to perceptions of declining faith in the post-Moraud era is a broader trend in local historical consciousness that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Not everyone who shared stories of what some see as Moraud’s miracles interpreted them as evidence of Moraud’s sainthood. For example, Ovide Wolverine noted throughout our interview that he did not think Moraud was a saint. Rather, he saw Moraud as a man with a strong faith and belief in God, and that it was the priest’s belief that protected him when he went over the Dipper Rapids. Ovide explained, “The good Lord was on his side I guess, or something, I don’t know. If you have a belief in something it’s pretty strong, it comes out. You make it. If you believe in what, not in Father Moraud, but the Supreme Being I’m talking about. God or Jesus, whatever you want to call it.”²⁷ In this way, it is not prayer to Father Moraud, or belief that Moraud was a saint, but a strong belief in God or Jesus that would enable anyone to survive or be healed. Here Moraud is less an exception and more of a model of the possibility of belief, a theme that came up throughout my interviews in explaining the possibilities of Catholic healing through prayers to Moraud, or the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as a way of distinguishing the Dene from the priests. Whereas Dene people were open to believing Catholic stories, Church officials refused to believe Dene stories – of powerful medicine men and local problems with Father Moraud.²⁸

²⁵ “Louise Dawatsare,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 112.

²⁶ “Rose Campbell,” *Voice of the Elders*, pp. 106-107.

²⁷ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014.

²⁸ The significance of belief in local approaches to Catholicism, particular faith based healing has been a theme throughout this dissertation. Belief has also been identified by community members like Jacob Estralshenan as a distinguishing issue between the Dene and Cree of the region who were willing to believe Catholic stories and the priests and Church officials who refused to accept local Indigenous beliefs and spiritual power. In particular, see chapter one, chapter two, and chapter seven. Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

The third story that is often provided as an example of Moraud's miracles is his stopping a fire from reaching tanks of gas in Patuanak, in effect preventing an explosion. Agnes Gardiner shared this story as a first hand account from when her family was living in Patuanak. She explained:

One spring I lived there... Yeah and that's the time we had fire. I don't know anyway. The graveyard, just behind there, and I lived this side. Gas at the store... because it's gonna burn all the things, the store this side. And he [Moraud] came. He wore a coat anyway. Just praying he go, like this [gestures with hands] And the wind came from this way or this way, this way. And he go like this his hands [holds hands up] and it went the other way. People like that, my dad and the other one fight fire all night... my dad, he beat the fire. Miracles huh...²⁹

Agnes's retelling of Moraud shifting the wind and changing the direction of the fire away from the gas tanks is based on her personal memory. Other versions of the story vary. In Louise Dawastare's account, the tanks are burning but are flung in the air and frozen by Moraud so they do not explode. Moraud's miracle here is not just personally defying death, but protecting the community. Dawastare explains, "Today we think of him as a saint as he was doing miracles for us. Dangerous things that never happened to us like the propane tanks that didn't explode but just burned out."³⁰

In Ralph Paul's story, Moraud has already passed away, and prayers to Moraud are used to stop the explosion. He explains: "I mentioned a lady earlier by the name of Judith. In Dene her name was pronounced as "ZooDir". Fire had broken out in late spring and was approaching a large gas container that was near the HBCo. It is said everyone fled because of the impending gas explosion. Judith went to the grave of Father Moraud and it is said that she would ask this priest not to let this accident from happening. This fire mysteriously stopped before it reached the gas tank."³¹ This recounting of stopping the fire, which may be a separate story, introduces the concept of Moraud protecting the community after his death. More generally, community members pray to Father Moraud for protection, and his grave is seen as a particularly powerful place – where holy water can be made, and sand can be used for healing.

The story of Father Moraud performing an exorcism at Dipper Lake was shared with me by Grandma Sarazine Ratt and translated by Elder Matilda Lariviere as an example of Father Moraud's power, and as further evidence of his sainthood. The exorcism was performed with the

²⁹ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

³⁰ "Louise Dawatsare," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 113.

³¹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, pp. 21-22.

aid of several men from the community who have passed away. In the story a man has “the devil inside of him” but is healed when Father Moraud arrived and called his name three times (while walking around the house where the possessed man was restrained).³² The exorcism was successful, and the man was able to die peacefully. Matilda and Sarazine had an animated conversation about the story, and my summary of it is based on Matilda’s efforts to explain the story in English. More so than the other stories of Moraud’s miracles, this story illustrates his spiritual power as a priest. Moraud is not simply surviving the elements himself, but with the assistance of local people casts out a demon. The Elder’s belief in this story is instructive regarding their own Catholic faith – as they understood that the problem with the sick man was that he was possessed, and that it was Moraud that had the power to heal him. The story of Moraud performing an exorcism also distinguishes him from priests who would come after him, setting Moraud apart from both his Indigenous parishioners and his fellow priests.



Figure 5.2: Elders Matilda Lariviere and Grandma Sarazine Ratt. Photo by author.

A more detailed version of the story is included in Robert Jarvenpa’s field notes in 1975, based on a conversation with Noel McIntyre and his wife Celina (Mary Lariviere’s daughter):

Around the fire we had been regaling each other of horror films we had seen. Both Noel and Celina had seen the 'Exorcist' and this brought to Celina's mind a 'possession' which Noel was able to elaborate on. Some time before Noel was born a brother of Jean Marie Gunn apparently started displaying unusual behaviour

³² Sarazine Ratt and M. Lariviere, 12 November 2014.

which was interpreted either by the people at Dipper Lake or Father Moraud as possession by the 'Devil' or a demon. The details of his behaviour were not related to us, but apparently he had to 'be watched' for a couple days by Josephine Apesis and another woman. Eventually, Father Moraud came to 'cast out the devil.' They did mention something about the Gunn man 'calling out someone's name.' Also, they did not indicate exactly what Father Moraud did to cure the possessed man, but apparently it involved holy water and the treatment was successful.³³

Jarvenpa does not incorporate this story into his articles about the Father Moraud pilgrimage. This may be due to the context in which he heard the story, younger people sitting around a fire discussing horror films, which contrasts with my hearing the story in the kitchen of a centenarian, translated by another Elder. I provide it here as an example of what community members in the past and some today consider to be Father Moraud's miracles and to provide a fuller depiction of the Catholicism of Moraud and how it was/is perceived by his congregation. The different context in which Jarvenpa heard the story suggests that these stories are also about entertainment and the unexplained. I have not heard this story in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and fewer people know the details of it than the story of crossing the lake, or going over the Dipper Rapids. Nonetheless, it is a story that suggests the type of priest that Father Moraud was – one to whom demons were literal, and who was seen to have the power to cast them out. In terms of local historical consciousness it can serve as either an example of why Father Moraud is considered a saint, or as a scary, local story to be shared around campfires.

Former chief, Ralph Paul mentions the story of Moraud performing an exorcism in his memoirs, but includes his understanding that the person who was supposedly possessed by the devil, had epilepsy. He writes:

I remember an Elder relating a story about a Dene that was supposedly 'possessed by the devil'. This happened in Dipper Lake. The priest dressed in his black cassock and white surplice armed with a bucket of holy water and the breviary that he carried performed the Act of exorcism. The people at Dipper Lake at that time truly believed that he had performed a miracle. I later learned that this particular person suffered from epileptic fits and would go into convulsions.³⁴

This passage includes a handwritten annotated note referring to a story by Philip Wolverine about a "piece of bone of Jesus," perhaps referring to a relic Moraud was believed to have used in these miracles. Chief Paul's recounting suggests a shift in historical consciousness from Elders who

³³ Robert Jarvenpa, From Patuanak to Primeau Lake Churchill River, Saskatchewan, June 30, 1975, "Field notes collected in northwestern Saskatchewan from 4 June to 29 July 1975," VI-D-15M, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

³⁴ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 10.

believe the exorcism was a spiritual miracle, to his own understanding that focuses on the medical condition of the supposedly possessed individual. Whereas Noel and Celina recounted the exorcism as a scary story with outsiders around the campfire, Chief Paul includes the story as an example of why he does not consider Father Moraud to be a saint, and his recounting indicates shifts from how Elders like Matilda and Grandma Ratt understand the event within a context of possession to his interpretation based on modern medicine. Ironically, Chief Paul's interpretation is similar to the official stance of the Catholic Church and Father Moraud himself.

Chief Paul is dismissive of Elders' belief in possession and Moraud's exorcism as resulting from colonial mindsets that have allowed them to be hoaxed by Moraud and what he sees as their indoctrination into the Catholic faith at residential school. Fitting more broadly with his memoir, he uses evidence, such as the knowledge that the possessed man had epilepsy, in his effort to critique local beliefs in the miracles of Moraud. If the man was not actually possessed, then an exorcism did not take place. Because the story ends with the man dying peacefully, there is no mystery of Moraud having permanently cured him. Chief Paul's interpretation relates to the varying uses of belief and evidence by community members in their interpretations and reinterpretations of the Catholic history of their community, though to others, such as Bernie Eaglechild, Father Moraud proves the exception to the Catholic authorities that she critiques.

There are several parallels between the story of Moraud conducting an exorcism and the story of Sas Keh or Bear Foot's encounter with Father Grandin that Chief Paul shares in his memoir and that was discussed in chapter two. In the story of Sas Keh and Grandin, Grandin wrongfully thought an Indigenous man was possessed by the Devil and Sas Keh, who did not fear the power of the priest, predicted that the missionaries' time in the northwest would be temporary. In contrast, in the story of Moraud's exorcism a Dene man is understood by his contemporaries to be possessed by the Devil, and Moraud is understood as having the spiritual power to cast that devil out. Chief Paul's efforts to remove Moraud's spiritual power from the exorcism story, and instead attribute the events to an undiagnosed medical condition, in effect negate the parallels and the shifts from Grandin and Sas Keh to Moraud. Moraud's exorcism, and perhaps more significantly local belief in both the possession and the exorcism, complicates how we understand colonialism and Indigenous Catholicism during the mid-twentieth century. It draws attention to continuity and change within the community and Moraud's varying roles as a

spiritually powerful, authoritarian, insider/outsider with the beliefs of Grandin, but the spiritual power of Sas Keh.³⁵

In addition to the more broadly shared stories of Father Moraud's miracles, I have heard and read more personal accounts of Father Moraud and general references to his ability to predict the future that individuals in the community interpret as miracles. For example, Elder Jacob Estralshenan explained, "He did a lot of miracles. He knew if somebody was sick they used to come and get him from Primeau, or Dipper, or Cree Lake. And if that person wasn't going to die, he knew. People used to rush, dog team, rush for the priest. When he was here, he'd say you don't have to rush, the person won't die."³⁶ Jacob frames this ability of Father Moraud as a miracle, suggesting a rethinking of some of the earlier accounts shared in the previous chapter, such as Margaret Wolverine's story of Father Moraud arriving to help when her father was sick.

Early in our interview, Elder Agnes Gardiner shared a personal story about Father Moraud that she depicted as a miracle she had seen.³⁷ In her story, she was in the hospital, near death following a surgery, until a visit from Father Moraud. She shared, "Because I'm dying in the hospital I had my surgery and he was sitting there, the fathers every day." After twenty-five days in bed, she described the doctor as having "put a pillow in a coffin" for her. Things changed when Father Moraud arrived, "he came from Patuanak Father Moraud, by boat must be. Went to church, went to ask God or something. Came back, came and tell me, your going to get up. Maybe tonight you could even try crutches... and tomorrow, you could walk around, and tomorrow go out side...Oh my God they said, old ladies."³⁸ Agnes explained that the next day she did get up. Father Moraud predicted that she would have a long life, and not be sick like that again. She shared, "He told me you won't be sick like that ever. You will live longer than me, I'm not going to live a long time...He said, 1965 he passed away, I was there."³⁹ Agnes shared her experience of getting better when Father Moraud arrived, and having a long life like he predicted (she was 82 when we met), as examples of miracles that she witnessed and evidence of Moraud's sainthood.

³⁵ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, pp. 9-10; See my more detailed discussion of Sas Keh in chapter two.

³⁶ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

³⁷ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Community members place water in jugs on Moraud's grave for four nights to make holy water, and use that in addition to sand from his grave for healing. Mary Lariviere in Patuanak explained, "That's why they put the holy water on his grave. Sand bag, put on self, aching. You put it all over. Healed some. People take water bottles leave it four nights on grave, go and pray. Elders still do that. Drink holy water – helps, just like holy water helps healing." Similarly Agnes in Ile-a-la-Crosse spoke about using sand from Moraud's grave with prayers for healing, sharing, "Sometimes I can't breath- I put it there, and I fall asleep... I pray, pray for a good night, Father Moraud."⁴⁰ Agnes' daughter Shirley added that her mom had recently been in the hospital, and prayed to Father Moraud. I asked if she used the sand in the hospital, to which Shirley responded that the doctors said it "wasn't very good for her...but she came home, has a lot of faith." It is the prayers to Father Moraud, in addition to using the holy water and the sand that are understood within the community to be healing. Others I have spoken to emphasized the importance of faith in this process



Figure 5.3: Father Moraud's grave. Photo by author.

During my first interview with Jacob Estralshenan, he mentioned that his grandfather had been a medicine man who received knowledge out of a dream.⁴¹ Jacob described his grandfather curing a lot of people, but noted that his grandfather did not want to teach him. Building on this

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

conversation, I asked about people using sand and holy water from Father Moraud's grave for healing. Jacob responded:

Yeah, yeah, yeah it heals some people, but you have to really believe in that. It's the only way, hey, you got to really believe. You've got to really believe something. To happen, that's how. A lot of people take sand from Father Moraud's grave. Just like holy water like. People get cured out of it, you get water from here, and you put it on Father Moraud's grave and leave it there about a week, and you take it back. Use that, and if you have sore legs, or whatever you use that hey, and they say it helps.⁴²

Belief was a significant theme in our broader conversation. Jacob earlier noted the hypocrisy of the priests asking the Dene to believe their stories, but refusing to believe Dene stories of powerful medicine men. In contrast, some community members believe so strongly in Father Moraud that they can take sand from his grave to cure themselves. Emphasizing the importance of belief, Jacob also noted personal experiences that he had in his life, particularly on the trap line, where he came to more fully believe in his prayers and the rosary.⁴³ Similarly, he provided examples of Father Moraud's miracles as evidence for believing in Moraud as a saint. Belief is strengthened by personal experience or a story that offers reasons to believe.

The culmination of devotion to Father Moraud is perhaps most apparent in the contemporary setting of the annual Moraud pilgrimage on the anniversary of his death. There is a deeper history of community members from Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse attending pilgrimages at Lac St. Anne (Alberta) and St. Laurent (Duck Lake, Saskatchewan), and more recently individuals from the northwest have made pilgrimages to Lourdes, Medjugorje, and Guadalupe.⁴⁴ The Archdiocese has been involved in the Father Moraud pilgrimage since Moraud's passing, and the pilgrimage is one of broader regional significance. In a conversation about local pilgrimages in 2014, Duane Favel, the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse shared, "A Patuanak one still exists, that's the only one I know of. It would be nice to get that Patuanak perspective on that. Particularly Father Moraud, the story of him, and he's buried right in the church yard actually."⁴⁵ The pilgrimage at Patuanak has been the longest lasting of local pilgrimages on the west side of northern Saskatchewan.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ This topic will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

⁴⁵ Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

I asked Agnes Gardiner about the pilgrimage after she shared that she got her pictures of Father Moraud there. She explained that the pilgrimage was every year on the 29th of July, “But now it’s different, because this side she’s praying in church. The other side Born Again...”⁴⁶ There has been an increase more generally in the region in individuals who identify as Born Again Christians, resulting in religious divisions. Some Born Again Christians in the northwest continue to participate in Marian devotion and attend Catholic events. In Patuanak few people identify as Born Again, and I have heard that some Catholics are not welcoming to Born Again Christians. Others that I spoke with have noted a shift in attendance to primarily older people. Jacob connected decreased attendance at the Patuanak pilgrimage with a larger trend of slackening down in terms of the Catholic faith. He explained:

Some places in northwest that used to have pilgrimages no longer have them. Used to go to Dillon...but they, we come here, people come here yeah, for that Father Moraud. But that long time ago, they as I say it’s slackened now, it used to be a lot of people here, from all over. Dillon, Buffalo, Canoe lake, Green lake everybody used to come down here. There used to be lot of tents here. But about five, six years it went like that, after that down again... That’s why I say slacken down the Catholic faith is going down...and people say, I asked some people “why don’t you go to church?” Ah, they said, I pray at home. You know That’s what they say. Fair enough some people know how to pray eh...but, I don’t know.⁴⁷

Even though the English River First Nation celebrated the fiftieth annual Father Moraud pilgrimage, and it is the only remaining pilgrimage in northwest Saskatchewan, there is a sense of waning. Agnes noted the separation between Born Again and Catholic, and the aging attendees of the pilgrimage. Jacob also noted a decrease in attendance that he associates with a decline in the Catholic faith. Agnes and Jacob’s observation of changing Catholic faith in their communities, influences how they continue to interpret stories of Father Moraud. Increasingly some Elders view the strong Catholic faith of the Moraud era almost nostalgically, combining this interpretation with their understandings of Moraud as a saint.

Others, like Ovide Wolverine appreciate the Catholic faith of Moraud, but do not see the former priest as a saint. To Ovide, Moraud and the pilgrimage in memory of him are part of local traditions that should be continued. He explained, “and we’ve been having pilgrimage ever since. Not saying that he was a saint, but the Elders have started it and we’ll keep tradition going I

⁴⁶ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

⁴⁷ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

guess.”⁴⁸ In this way, continuing to share stories about Moraud, and to have the annual pilgrimage is not just about Moraud, but a way of honouring traditions established by earlier generations. Ironically the Elders Ovide noted learning from included Alex Solomon, who with Ovide’s grandfather Thomas Wolverine advocated for Father Moraud to be replaced. The significance of Catholicism as part of community history, and the interpretation of Catholic practices as local traditions that are done to remember earlier generations is a theme that will continue in the following chapters—though how people today remember the faith of earlier generations likely differs from the more complicated ways that their parents and grandparents negotiated their relationships with Catholicism and the Church.

Throughout this chapter and the previous, I have noted how local historical consciousness has affected Moraud’s status as a saint in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse. During his life Moraud was clearly a colonial, missionary priest with a reputation for being strict, and whose replacement was requested by some of his parishioners; however, he is remembered primarily for his miracles and the assistance he provided to local people. Stories critiquing the Church and priests during Moraud’s lifetime tend to be more general, and rarely mention Father Moraud by name. Moraud clearly held many of the same views and practices for which his contemporaries have been critiqued, most apparent in his own circular letters. I now turn to outlining general trends relating to Moraud in local historical consciousness, including a shift in understandings with Moraud’s death, the reinterpretation of Moraud’s strictness as either protecting the community or contributing to a strong Catholic faith, interpretations of stories of Moraud using humour, understandings of Moraud as an exceptional figure when compared to residential school experiences, and as a figure who remains compatible with local Indigeneity for some who have moved away from the Catholic Church.

Moraud’s death and status as a local saint was accompanied by a shift in historical consciousness. As I noted in the previous chapter, only Ralph Paul and Frank McIntyre provide direct critiques of Father Moraud, although others more generally have criticized the colonial role of the Catholic Church. In his 1979 field notes, Robert Jarvenpa writes about the changing views of Father Moraud based on a conversation with Frank McIntyre. Jarvenpa shares Frank’s observations, “No one liked him when living, now dead, kneel by his grave. If he was alive he’d

⁴⁸ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

be martyred for sure. Biggest anathema was gambling. If caught playing cards, not go to church as much as a year. Very stern about drinking too. Many old time priests like Father Rapet equally strict.”⁴⁹ Frank’s observation about a shifting attitude in Patuanak about Father Moraud helps to make sense of some of the contrast between Moraud’s own recountings in his circulars and the stories about him that I have heard from community members. There is evidence that local people resisted some of Moraud’s more colonial efforts to control how people lived, in the fact that people continued practices that Moraud banned, and in requests for a new priest. There is also agency in how the people of Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse have claimed Moraud as their saint, especially given the priest’s seeming resignation about his fate and doubt about the faith of his congregation.

Because of the difficulty for local people to reconcile narratives of a colonial mission priest with those of a local saint protecting community members, critiques of the stricter aspects of Moraud’s practices are typically provided in a more general sense. For example, in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, I have heard about the problematic role of outsiders in dominating decision making in northwestern communities for much of the twentieth century, and critiques of the earlier practices of the Church in banning local Indigenous practices as well as punishing people for dancing, drinking, gambling, and having children out of wedlock. Significantly, Frank McIntyre makes comparisons between Moraud and other strict priests in the region like Father Rapet, whose role in the Treaty Ten negotiations was discussed in chapter three. Community members in earlier publications and in my own interviews were more ready to critique Rapet than Moraud. The difference between how Moraud and Rapet are remembered I argue is due to Moraud’s capacity to perform miracles during his life and after his death as a local saint. It was respect for Rapet’s position as priest that led to his political influence in 1906. Moraud’s position as a local saint, who Elders like Agnes Gardiner compare to Jesus, draws attention to the greater spiritual and political power that he had and continues to hold within local historical consciousness.

While I have generally found that local people refer to Moraud as strict or mean as a catchall for anything that they perceive as authoritarian or colonial about his time in the region,

⁴⁹ June 15th 1979, Site 1, Frank McIntyre Addendum. Robert Jarvenpa, "Field notes on Chipewyan ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory" (1979) VI-D-38M R, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

their recountings of his strictness do not imply a lack of respect.⁵⁰ Moraud not being liked when he was alive does not contradict him being identified as a saint. In contrast, efforts to have Moraud replaced for not meeting the Catholic needs of people in Patuanak are more difficult to fit with local historical consciousness that emphasizes Moraud's sainthood and exceptionalism. Within the stories of Moraud that I have heard, a motivation for framing critiques in terms of strictness may relate to community efforts to show respect of the late priest. My sense is that many people today were not aware that their grandparents tried to have Moraud replaced, so they may believe that they are respecting the wishes of their Elders. It is through interpreting Moraud through a Catholic lens, rather than simply a decolonizing one that his actions most contradict with current historical consciousness. In this way, critiques by Frank McIntyre and Ralph Paul fit within more recent efforts at decolonization than the Catholic concerns of earlier generations. Chief Paul's efforts at decolonizing have resulted in him separating Indigeneity from Catholicism, whereas individuals like Chief Sandypoint and others were interacting with Moraud as Indigenous Catholics.⁵¹

Like Willow Heart, community members have reinterpreted Moraud's actions and predictions within the context of more recent events. In this way, his strictness against economic and infrastructure development in Patuanak is understood within local historical consciousness as an effort to protect the community from the negative aspects associated with the road and more recent developments. More generally at a time where there is concern about the loss of language and traditional lifestyles, Father Moraud is understood as a protector of Indigeneity. Jacob Estralshenan explained, "They asked Father Moraud, he didn't want the roads to come in, so they never built a highway until he passed away. They wanted an airport here, he said no. After he passed on, then they build that."⁵² In response to my question of why Father Moraud was against roads and an airport, Jacob answered, "He [Father Moraud] knew there was going to

⁵⁰ The choice in terms could also relate to sharing stories with myself – a white settler woman who is an outsider to English River and Ile-a-la-Crosse. In the introduction and chapters six and seven I more thoroughly consider how my positionality could result in the people I interviewed not feeling comfortable openly talking about colonialism and racism in their community history.

⁵¹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript; "Alex Solomon, Noel Sandypoint, and Abraham Misponas, Letter to Bishop Lajeunesse, The Pas" January 5th 1952, Patuanak, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada; "Noel Sandypoint letter to His Excellency Bishop M Lajeunesse," December 27th 1952, Patuanak SK, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada; "Thomas Wolverine letter to His Excellency Bishop P Dumouchel," June 15th 1958, Patuanak SK, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

⁵² Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

affect people, now everything drugs and stuff coming in, all kind of people coming in. I think he knew that was going to happen. Them days we didn't know about drugs. They used to drink, but not very many people.”⁵³ Similarly, Agnes Gardiner answered my question about Father Moraud being strict by emphasizing Moraud's efforts to protect the community. Agnes said, “But he [Father Moraud] wants to change them yeah, he said when they got highway don't make it a highway. They had a highway go cars, trucks, going to be trouble, he said. And they make it that one. That's the time that guy killed, shot them.”⁵⁴ In Agnes's recounting Father Moraud is depicted as a prophet who knew that a highway to Patuanak would “be trouble.” The fact that a murder took place in Patuanak in 1982 is used as evidence of Moraud's predictions being correct.⁵⁵ For Jacob and Agnes, the perceived accuracy of Moraud's predictions justifies his strictness and paternalism, positioning him as a protector of Patuanak.

Continued associations between development and problems in Patuanak further reinforce nostalgia for the times of Father Moraud. The 2013 agreement between the English River First Nation and Areva and Cameco provides an additional context in which stories of Father Moraud's efforts against development are understood as either limiting opportunities for Indigenous wealth and autonomy or as protecting Indigenous lifestyles, languages, and the communities themselves.⁵⁶ Some individuals with whom I met praised recent developments as opportunities for English River to move towards increased local control. Although support of more recent development was not necessarily accompanied with a critique of individuals like Moraud who had previously prevented such a move, more generally, those who have been the most critical of Moraud have tended to support development. For example, Frank McIntyre was the chief of English River from 1965-1969 and negotiated with the government to develop the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Agnes Gardiner, 19 June 2014.

⁵⁵ Robert Jarvenpa writes about the triple homicide that took place in Patuanak in 1982 in the conclusion to his more introspective work, *Northern Passage: Ethnography and Apprenticeship among the Subarctic Dene*. In his conclusion to the text, titled “Aftershock,” he notes the completion of the spur road to the community in 1977 and the changes that came when Patuanak was linked “forever to the outside.” He writes about what he sees as an allure to young people to leave the community, as well as increased numbers being able to come to Patuanak for the annual Father Moraud pilgrimages. He abruptly shifts from discussing the summer pilgrimages to learning of the tragedy that claimed the life of one young woman and two men. See Robert Jarvenpa, *Northern Passage: Ethnography and Apprenticeship Among the Subarctic Dene* (Long Grove IL: Waveland Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes, See related discussion in chapter three where stories of Willow Heart have been interpreted within the more recent context of development. In other geographical and temporal contexts, historian Keith Carlson has similarly noted the potential political contingency of particular narratives within local historical consciousness. See for example: Keith Carlson, “Born Again of the People: Luis Taruc and Peasant Ideology in Philippine Revolutionary Politics,” *Histoire Sociale / Social History*. Vol. XLI, No. 82, (2008): 417-458.

airstrip and highway. He shared, “the time I was chief I worked with the Federal and Provincial governments on projects they could share because we wanted an airstrip. They agreed and we got an airstrip. Then I talked with the provincial government and we got the highway...negotiated with Indian Affairs funding to make our own admin, our own government. Big money for the community.”⁵⁷ As I have noted in other chapters, development and local control, typically associated with decolonizing, can also be characterized as moments of conflict within local communities like Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Histories of Moraud, like those of Willow Heart, are then mobilized in support of current political positions and used to make sense of current realities.

Complicating this sense of a particular local historical consciousness that is more critical of Father Moraud because of personal ties to local development is the continued role of Father Moraud stories in recountings of Patuanak’s history. For example, Frank McIntyre shared stories of Father Moraud in a published article in 1982 that did not include critiques of the priest that characterized his comments to Jarvenpa or his reflections in the 2006 *Voice of the Elders* publication. The 1982 article by Graham Guest focuses on Frank’s stories of changes in Patuanak, including accounts of attending residential school and life on the trapline. Here Moraud is depicted as a hard working, “tough old man,” with Frank emphasizing, “I had known him since I was a kid.”⁵⁸ Frank praises Moraud for not complaining and saying Mass first thing in the morning under the stars in winter. His recounting then turns to what are depicted in the article as “unusual incidents involving Father Moraud,” and the story of going over Dipper Rapid and Crossing the Lake are shared. Frank is quoted describing the Dipper Lake story “like a miracle.” Frank’s inclusion of Father Moraud stories, as part of an article about his own “action-filled life” suggests a more complicated historical consciousness of Moraud. He critiques Moraud within local publications like *Voice of the Elders* published primarily with the intent of preserving stories for future generations. In contrast, stories of Moraud comprise notable parts of Patuanak’s history that Frank chose to share in his interview for the 1982 article. Here, Father Moraud’s work in Patuanak and his miracles were shared less as part of a narrative of Moraud’s sainthood, but rather as examples of Patuanak’s (and Frank’s) uniqueness to a broader provincial audience.

⁵⁷ “Frank McIntyre,” *Voice of the Elders*, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁸ Graham Guest, “Patuanak’s Frank McIntyre,” *Saskatchewan Learning*, June 1982, DNS Academic Education Branch, Northern Saskatchewan Archives.

Father Moraud's paternalistic insistence that his congregation follow traditional trapping lifestyles in communities like Dipper Lake, rather than be corrupted by the influences of town life that he saw as non-Indigenous, is understood within local historical consciousness as evidence of Moraud's exceptionalism, especially given the more recent context of young people being separated from traditional socio-economic lifestyles and unable to speak the Dene language. As Bernie Eaglechild explained:

From the stories my dad told me, he was an exceptional man. Like, um, my dad said when people started to come here, for education in the early sixties, and of course Indian affairs didn't help matters.... He [Moraud] told people to go back to where you come from, to Dipper, Primeau. If they want to give you education they will come to you. In that sense, we could have kept our lifestyle like our language and what not. In fact he used to say. He tried to tell people, you live your lifestyle.⁵⁹

Others remember Father Moraud's calls for them to speak their language. Moraud's emphasis on traditions like trapping closely related to a particular type of Catholic lifestyle separate from the vices of town life. In this way, Moraud, as a Catholic priest, at times had different goals than government agents. His emphasis on speaking Indigenous languages and preserving trapping lifestyles has been reinterpreted through a lens of Indigeneity and decolonization rather than Catholicism. As was discussed in chapter two, Bernie Eaglechild dissociated her interpretation of the past from what she saw as her mother's problematic Catholic historical consciousness.⁶⁰ Here she is able to admire Moraud, despite his position as a Catholic priest because of his exceptionalism and efforts to protect the Dene language and socio-economic traditions. Current contexts that include concerns around losing languages and traditions have resulted in reevaluating Father Moraud's actions in local historical consciousness.

Similarly, some Elders within the current context of declining church attendance remember Moraud's strict teachings about the Catholic faith nostalgically. In this way, Moraud's strictness, for example during catechism with his scroll, is reevaluated as a positive that resulted in a generation of individuals with strong faith. For example, in *Voice of the Elders*, Jonas Aubichon explains, "Father Moraud taught us what we know today. He taught us how to pray and that's why we are strong spiritually, today. The priest today will not be able to teach us what Father Moraud taught us."⁶¹ Here, Father Moraud is credited with the strong spirituality of Elders

⁵⁹ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Jonas Aubichon," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 96.

in the community. Jonas then contrasted the spiritual strength of his generation and his Elders with that of younger generations, attributing the difference to the lack of strong priests like Father Moraud. He says:

Today there is nobody to teach the young people about praying and the bell does not ring at 9:00 o'clock in the morning. There is not enough teaching about prayers and catechism today. Maybe the priest is lazy. Wherever Father Moraud stayed, he taught us the way of life and how to pray. Even when he was at Knee Lake, Primeau Lake, Dipper Lake and Cree Lake; he taught us all the time. He used to travel throughout these communities and continuously teach the people. That's how it was a long time ago.⁶²

To Jonas, it is because later priests were not as strong as Moraud that young people do not know how to pray. The themes of younger generations not praying, and calls for them to learn the rosary, pray, and attend church were echoed by other Elders in the 2006 MLTC collection. For example, Delia Black explained, "Here was a priest that used to live with us. He used to teach the young people and they used to have catechism in those days but now the priest doesn't teach catechism. He doesn't do that anymore."⁶³ Similarly, during one of my own meetings with Mary Lariviere, she shared that she has tried to teach her grandchildren the type of Catholic faith that she learned from Father Moraud. She showed me some of the pictures that she likes to share with her grandchildren (see Figure 5.3). The perceived context of a decline in the Catholic faith has led to Moraud's emphasis on sin in catechism and sermons, his lessons about prayer, and his shaming of individuals who did not attend church to be reinterpreted as the reasons for the stronger Catholic faith among more recent Elders.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Delia Black," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 100. Yvonne Paul expressed similar sentiments in her message to her grandchildren: "Today people are not forced to go to church. They go whenever they feel like it. There's a lot of people like that. I remember Father Moraud had given me my first communion. He used to pick me up every day by boat across the river so I could go to catechism, so I could be prepared for First Communion." "Yvonne Paul," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 154.

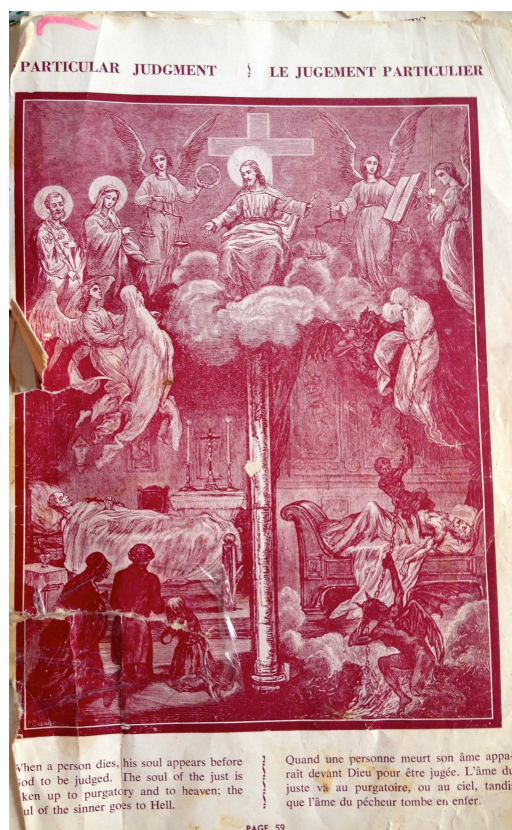


Figure 5.4: Example of materials that Mary Lariviere likes to share with her grandchildren.

Although Jacob was critical of priests labeling activities they did not approve of among the students at Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) and community members more generally as sinful (and he clearly includes Moraud in this group), he suggests learning respect as a positive result of this practice. Especially when taken in the context of additional conversations about changing faith within Patuanak and the northwest region, Jacob seems to nostalgically identify the strictness of the priests with a strong Catholic faith, even though he is critical of the priests during our conversation. In response to my question about the apology for residential schools, Jacob said:

I don't want to talk about it, I had enough. Well the only good things that came out of there were respect. Because we used to get punished, eh, for everything we did wrong. Everything we did a little bit wrong was a sin. ... That's another thing I mean I don't understand, every little thing we did. Now there's none of that. Priests don't talk about it... I never heard since we came, never. Last time I hear was when Father Moraud was alive, after that nothing.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

There is a lot of ambiguity in this statement by Jacob. He hesitates to discuss residential schools and critiques the priests for labeling every mistake as a sin. Here, Moraud is compared to the priests at BIRS, rather than seen as an exception. Jacob also says that he sees this as leading to respect, like others drawing attention to a positive effect of Moraud's strictness. Jacob later reflected on the relationship between the "slackening down" in Catholic faith more recently compared to the prevalence of Catholicism during Moraud's time. To him, it was not Moraud's strictness of doctrine but rather the priest's willingness to travel throughout the region and work hard for the people that resulted in higher church attendance and a strong Catholic faith among congregation members, explaining, "People used to really have faith, Catholic. But now they won't if they live in Cree [Lake]." Jacob concluded by saying, "That priest sure worked for the people, maybe that's why people used to go to church lots."⁶⁵

Ralph Paul has also observed a shift in faith in Patuanak that he associates with declining numbers of individuals who personally knew Moraud. He writes, "The people that really believed in him and his teachings are now diminishing in number. Most of the people he ministered to in the early part of the last century have passed on or are passing on. The younger generation do not follow his ways and are not practicing the catholic teachings their parents had followed." While declining numbers of individuals who personally knew Moraud certainly shapes attendance at the Father Moraud pilgrimage, individuals I spoke with noted that they have shared stories of Moraud with younger generations. Several Elders shared stories of Father Moraud in *Voice of the Elders* in 2006 so they could pass stories and messages on to younger generations.⁶⁶ Arguably the prevalence of references to Father Moraud included in this publication indicates the importance of Moraud for older community members, and their efforts to preserve these stories within local historical consciousness.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Twelve out of twenty-seven Elders from English River include stories of Father Moraud in their sections in *Voice of the Elders*. Most Elders have a page or two to share their stories though some are considerably shorter and some as long as six pages. Others who do not include stories of Moraud speak extensively of the importance of prayer more generally, and some have shared stories of Father Moraud in other contexts (such as Sarazine Ratt, Mary Lariviere, and Jacob Estralshenan). This is significant as the intent of the publication was to preserve knowledge for future generations. The fact that twelve chose to include Moraud is an indication of the role Father Moraud continued to play in local memories in 2006. Similarly, in my own interviews and conversations with community members, I found that people knew who Father Moraud was and had at least some sense of the stories related to him. This differed from my questions about 1885, the signing of treaty ten, and Willow Heart, showcasing the continued significance of Father Moraud in local historical consciousness in both Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

I also observed older community members in Patuanak encourage younger family members to pray to Father Moraud when they are struggling. For younger community members, Father Moraud is not someone for whom they have personal memories, but rather a figure whose image is displayed throughout the homes of parents and grandparents. Some Elders have tried to address the decline in Catholic faith by teaching younger people to pray to Father Moraud the saint. In *Voice of the Elders*, Joe Roy called for young people to pray explaining, “Father Moraud is always with us. I have his picture here and he still keeps care of us. That’s why he wanted to be buried in Patuanak. There is no priest in a lot of places but we still have a priest here. My poor dear kids go to church and pray at night with your mom and dad so God will bless us.”⁶⁷

In addition to religious stories about Father Moraud the saint and his miracles, people in Patuanak have consistently shared funny stories about their former priest. Even though Moraud noted in his circulars his displeasure at the tendency of his congregation to laugh at him, humorous stories apparent in local historical consciousness highlight the more human elements of a local saint and suggest points of difference between the outsider priest and the people he served. Additionally, these stories, and the continued telling of them, can be interpreted as examples of local agency and resistance, as individuals share stories of Moraud in their own ways, and make sense of some of the more ambiguous and colonial aspects of his role in their communities by using humor.⁶⁸ People joke about Father Moraud not wanting to spend any money and often needing assistance or a ride, his tendency to hurt himself in accidents, and other memories of daily life with the priest. In these stories the position of the authoritative missionary saint is flipped to an outsider requiring local assistance and expertise.

⁶⁷ “Joe Roy,” *Voice of the Elders*, p. 156.

⁶⁸ Literary scholars have drawn attention to the significance of Indigenous humour as a tool of resistance as well as a means to discuss trauma. In particular see, Kristina Fagan, “Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo: Storytelling, Humour, and Trauma in the Fiction of Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 34.1 (2009); Indigenous studies scholar Neal McLeod has also noted the significance of humour as a form of resistance Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007); Historians working with Indigenous communities have paid less attention to the use of humour by Indigenous groups, particularly in reference to settlers. An exception to this is Madronna Holden’s “‘Making All the Crooked Ways Straight’: The Satirical Portrait of Whites in Coast Salish Folklore,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 89, no. 353 (1976); pp.271- 293. More generally oral historians are beginning to pay attention to humour as a tool of communication in interview settings. Similar to discussions in other disciplines humour can be indicative of topics that interviewees feel less comfortable discussing as well as their relationship with the interviewer. This relates to issues around stories that are shared and not shared depending how they fit with broader community understandings. In other words, a hesitancy of individuals to share experiences that do not fit with established local narratives of the past. See for example, Ned R. Norrick, “Humour in Oral History Narratives,” *Oral History* Vol. 34, no. 2 *War Memory* (2006): pp. 85-94.

Ralph Paul shares several self-identified humorous stories of Father Moraud in his memoir, and indicates that these are stories that others in his community also like to share. One story took place on the Corpus Christi feast day:

As the procession proceeded, the priest would chant out the names of catholic saints and the congregation would all chant out 'Ora Pro Nobis' (pray for us). It was a windy day that particular day in Patuanak and the book that the priest was using fell off his hand. He instructed the altar boy, out loud, in Dene language, "pick up my book." After he said this all chanted out 'Ora Pro nobis'. My cousin George Campbell is fond of telling this story.⁶⁹

Another example of a humorous story shared by Chief Paul involves Father Moraud mispronouncing a Dene word and the French Catholic Doctor Lavoie from Ile-a-la-Crosse, who was visiting Patuanak and ended up attending one of Father Moraud's Sunday sermons. Chief Paul writes:

Father Moraud's sermon was all done in the Dene Sulineh language and Dr. Lavoie does not understand the Dene Language. SHHETH, (not a misprint), just an attempt to write the Dene word for mountain...Unfortunately for Father Moraud, he could not properly say SHHETH. His TH sound came out only as a T. When Dr. Lavoie heard this word, he suddenly perked up and looked astoundingly at this priest that said out loud in Church, SHIT NEH TCHA.⁷⁰

Stories described by the tellers as humorous speak less to their religiosity than to understanding the perception of a community that deferred to the priests authority to the point of ridiculousness as well as local efforts to challenge that power.

Humour also provides a mechanism for critiquing aspects of Moraud's authoritarianism and highlighting local agency while remaining respectful to a figure who is seen as exceptional. For example, Bernie Eaglechild told me several self-described funny stories about her brother Harry and Father Moraud, explaining that she prefers to tell the funny ones to her grandkids than the religious ones. She explained, while laughing:

And Harry didn't take no shit from nobody, priest or no. And the priest used to make him wash his rubbers, rubbers he'd wore over moccasins. Muddy, so the priest got him to wash them at the dock by the mission there. Meantime, the priest goes in his house, lit up the gas stove to heat up something. Lit it up went to the church, meantime the gas stove burst into flames. Harry got back at the same time as the priest. Priest said, 'Harry why did you do this to the stove?' And my brother said, 'I didn't touch it, I was washing your dirty rubbers.' He used to

⁶⁹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, pp. 96-97.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 31-32.

answer back--that's why he defended himself. So the priest went to see my mom.
'Harry, I don't know if he can do his first communion,' he said this to me.⁷¹

To my ears, as an outsider, the story described a priest who was not afraid to use his authority, and made threats that, given the religious education of the people at the time, would have been fairly serious especially considering the broader context provided by community members who have been more critical of Father Moraud. There is also a juxtaposition of authority by showing Father Moraud making a mistake. Humor provides the space for discussing Father Moraud more critically, both in the community and with an outside researcher. Using humor enables a level of critique and agency, without fully undermining respect for Moraud.⁷²

More so than others that I spoke with, and Moraud's own circulars, Bernie's retellings of Moraud suggest a priest who was strict in terms of dogma, catechism, and socio-economic development, but who had a sense of humour. Bernie explained, "he could be funny if he wanted to be."⁷³ Like her story of her brother, Bernie laughed while sharing her own story of catechism and first communion with Father Moraud, even though her recounting ends with her going to confession for laughing at the priest. She explained, laughing:

The summer we moved here, I was six, had to make my first communion. For some reason I was the only one in catechism. Finally time to do first communion and he showed me how to receive the host. Stick out your tongue and he would show me how to stick out my tongue. Every time I'd look at him I'd start laughing and the altar boy was laughing. I couldn't get over how long a tongue he had. Go to confession, in the church.⁷⁴

She went on to share a story about one of her sisters, laughing with Moraud. She explained, "I had one sister, she was hard of hearing, so the priest used to try to sign language, only he wasn't very good at it. I guess he made horns to tell her that's the devil or whatever. Laughing, the priest was laughing too. Some good things about him."⁷⁵ Even with being sent to confession for laughing at the priest, Bernie remembers first communion fondly, in contrast to Ralph Paul's recounting of his first communion. This could be a reflection of Ovide Wolverine's observation that Moraud softened when he was older. Bernie's different personal experiences with Moraud led to a different understanding of him than Ralph Paul, even though they both are critical of the role of the Catholic Church in their community. The difference in their personal experience with

⁷¹ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁷² Fagan, "Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo"; McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*.

⁷³ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Moraud results in Bernie situating Moraud as an exception when compared to other priests that she has known.

Bernie's stories of Moraud serve to humanize an individual that others have placed on a saintly pedestal or critiqued as a colonial agent by focusing on Moraud the man. She shared that her mom, Christine George, who in other places she describes as a "diehard Catholic" had, "some good stories about Father Moraud. And she used to tell stories also where father Moraud was a priest, but he was also a man. He got sick."⁷⁶ It was Moraud's actions in the northwest that Bernie admires, rather than his capacity for performing miracles. She explained, "I liked Father Moraud, it was the fact that he lived, knew the language, and that's what makes me admire him." Bernie's own experiences and admiration of Moraud's role in the community, rather than his role as a saint will shape the stories of Moraud that she passes on to younger generations, potentially marking an additional shift in local historical consciousness about Father Moraud. In response to my question if she would share stories of Father Moraud with her grandchildren, Bernie answered that she would "Probably tell the funny ones more than the religious ones"⁷⁷ Both Bernie and her mother tell stories of Father Moraud the man to teach lessons, but whereas Bernie's mom (and other Elders of her generation) emphasize the religious stories, Bernie plans to focus on the funny ones.

Experiences at Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) and recountings of Bishop Dumouchel sexually abusing young girls has affected historical consciousness about the Catholic Church in the community, and further positioned stories of Moraud as an exception. As Bernie Eaglechild explained "To me he [Father Moraud] was a rare Catholic—separate from what I got to know afterwards."⁷⁸ Some community members have shared that Bishop Dumouchel, who was involved in establishing the pilgrimage for Father Moraud and saw to the communities' religious needs following the death of Moraud, sexually abused young girls in the community.⁷⁹ Allegations against Bishop Dumouchel remain a point of tension within the community with some Elders refusing to acknowledge or believe them, relating more generally to the refusal of some Elders to accept stories of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools. According to Bernie Eaglechild "In my mom's eyes the bishop priests are holier than though and they should

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

not be talked about or against.”⁸⁰ To those who accept the stories of abuse, Dumouchel’s increased presence in the community following Moraud’s death, is a cause for suspicion. Moraud wrote in his circulars in 1963 that the bishop only spoke English and that few community members understood English at that time, raising questions about how effective Dumouchel would have been at serving the communities religious needs after the death of Moraud as Dumouchel was an outsider in many complicated ways.⁸¹

As I have argued in other chapters, it is necessary to understand that some community members equate Catholic faith with deference to Catholic authorities to fully appreciate why Elders like Bernie’s mom have difficulty accepting stories about the bishop or abuse at residential schools. In contrast, both Bernie and her mom identify Moraud as an exceptional figure. Bernie’s mom’s respect for Moraud is entangled with his role as a saint, and for Bernie it is due to his integration into the community and work to protect Indigenous languages and socio-economic traditions that differentiates him from other priests that she knew. Their mutual respect for Father Moraud is evident in Bernie saying, “My mom thinks the world of him [Moraud], and I do too, from what I know.”⁸² Bernie remains critical of the Catholic Church and the prominent role of Catholicism in stories shared by Elders like her mom, but stories of Moraud continue to be significant in Bernie’s historical consciousness. She explained, “I have my views... but Father Moraud was an exceptional man. He lived, died with the people.”⁸³

Understanding the role of Father Moraud in local historical consciousness complicates understandings of the power of local priests in Indigenous communities during the mid-twentieth century. Moraud’s saintly status would have added to the local spiritual power of the Church, and bolstered a tendency for some to equate Catholic faith with Catholic authority. When combined with the focus on sin in his teachings and sermons, Moraud’s spiritual power inadvertently contributed to a local context where the sincere Catholic faith of some community members made it difficult for them to accept the realities of sexual abuse at the residential schools and more broadly within the Church. I have also found a more complicated historical relationship between Moraud and the community he served, most apparent in requests for a new priest.

⁸⁰ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁸¹ Moraud wrote, “Bishop Dumouchel, not knowing the chippeweyan language, preached in English. And Father Bourbonnais, from Isle a la Crosse, came to help me interpreted in chippeweyan. Almost of them. Didn’t knew enough English, to understand an English sermon.” Louis Moraud, Circular, 10 August 1963.

⁸² Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

⁸³ Ibid.

Moraud was critiqued not as a colonial agent, but as a Catholic priest. Local historical consciousness has tended to erase critiques of Moraud in his capacity as a priest in focusing on either his sainthood, exceptionalism, or in fewer instances critiquing his role in the colonial aspects of the Church—suggesting shifting interpretations of what it means to be Catholic as well as what it means to be Indigenous. As in other chapters, there is a sense in the local historical consciousness among people currently in their fifties and sixties contrasting themselves with an uncritical generation of Elders who equated faith with deference, and there is evidence of this, but also more complicated relationships between earlier Elders who saw themselves as belonging to a Catholic community and were not afraid to critique a miracle working priest who was not fulfilling their spiritual needs. Varying understandings of what it means to be Catholic, what it means to be Indigenous, and how these concepts are negotiated within individuals' life histories shape local historical consciousness about Moraud.

This section has considered both the colonial and saintly aspects of Father Moraud's life in Patuanak and northwestern Saskatchewan and considered the varying ways he is remembered within local historical consciousness. As I have argued throughout this chapter, it is necessary to understand Father Moraud's miracles and saintly status to make sense of his power within the community regarding prayer, behavior, and development, but also to recognize that despite the belief that he performed miracles, during his life community members were not afraid to ask that he be replaced when they felt their religious needs were not being met. Moraud's religious power did not result in deferential parishioners. This chapter began by outlining stories of Moraud's miracles before turning to the various trends in local historical consciousness regarding Moraud in the region, notably the shift from missionary priest to saint coupled with a tendency since his death to not directly critique Father Moraud. Ralph Paul and Frank McIntyre provide two exceptions to this general rule, and other community members have more generally critiqued the Catholic Church in ways that implicate Moraud without naming him. In contrast to critiques within local historical consciousness that focus on the colonial aspects of Moraud, efforts during his life to have him replaced are best understood within the context of a Catholic community. Moraud's strictness has been reinterpreted given the context of development within the community, as well as a perception of a decline in the Catholic faith. Finally, humorous stories of Moraud, and accounts that focused on Moraud the man, rather than Moraud the saint demonstrate resistance to Moraud and narratives of his saintly status, suggesting continuity in

community members not equating faith with deference. Stories of Father Moraud complicate understandings of colonialism, Catholicism, and Indigeneity. Moraud was both insider and outsider, authoritarian and advocate, saint and absentee priest, and a cause for division as well as community building, as local historical consciousness about Moraud in Dipper Lake, Knee Lake, Primeau Lake and Cree Lake has become part of Patuanak's story.

I have focused primarily on stories from Patuanak with some from Ile-a-la-Crosse. Moraud brought people in the region together, most notably for the annual pilgrimage in his honour. This chapter has considered an individual colonial missionary priest who many Dene and Metis people have identified as their local saint, suggesting the complexity of colonization and its entanglement with the sincere Catholic faith of some Indigenous people. More generally, shifting historical consciousness about Father Moraud indicates the complex and changing relationship between Catholicism and Indigeneity during the colonizing and decolonizing processes, and suggested how understandings of what it means to belong to a Catholic community has shifted over time. These themes are continued in the following section that considers two local approaches to decolonization in the northwest during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: the local take-over of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Catholic Church and the use of Catholic faith, notably expressed through prayer and encounters with the Blessed Virgin Mary in the region as forms of healing.

Stories of Decolonizing Catholic Communities: Negotiating Catholicism, 1972- Present

“You can never speak against priests. My dad was so set on anyone saying anything against priests because they left their homes to come and teach us about Jesus. So I don’t think anyone ever said anything against them until that school issue came out, and they said they were fighting and they were saying things against the priest. I never heard anything but that’s what they said.”¹

- Irene Desjarlais

Less than a decade after Father Moraud’s passing, some local community members in Ile-a-la-Crosse “spoke against” the Catholic Church and ultimately took control of the school from the mission. The move towards local control over education was motivated by local opposition to the paternalistic, authoritarian, and essentially colonial roles and attitudes of the Church and other non-Indigenous people in the community such as those working for the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The movement for local control, which I also refer to as the takeover, brought to light tensions within the community between leaders striving for decolonization through local control and those whose Catholic faith included not going against local priests or the institution of the Church. In this way, local historical consciousness around the takeover draws attention to the significance of understanding Indigenous Catholicism amidst efforts of decolonization, and the increasing struggle within the region to negotiate Indigeneity and Catholicism.

There was a tendency for Indigenous leaders working with the Metis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS) and Church officials to equate faithful Catholics with being uncritical of the authoritarian actions of the priests and the Church as an institution. However, many individuals who supported local control also maintained strong Catholic faith, and some who initially were unwilling to go against the Church have come to see local control as benefiting their community. In the above quotation, Elder Irene Desjarlais illustrates the local view that the school issue was the first time local people went against the Church, a public perception that differs from her own observations and experiences as well as my findings in earlier chapters about Willow Heart and individuals like Mrs. Ahenakew and Chief Noel Sandypoint. Central to historical consciousness about the school issue is a narrative of moving against the Church for the first time, as well as varying understandings of the local conflict that reveal more ambiguous relationships between community members and the Church. The takeover of the school in the

¹ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 October 2012. For more information about Irene and our work together, see Appendix A. Irene passed away in 2015.

1970s marks a public shift in how community members understand the relationship between Ile-a-la-Crosse and the Catholic Church, but did not equal a separation from the Catholic faith as community members continued to practice Catholicism and attend pilgrimages like that to Father Moraud, as well as others further afield in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Anne.

As in other chapters, local memories and understandings of the takeover as well as more recent religious and spiritual practices illustrate the capacity for Catholic Indigenous people to critique the institution of the Church and the colonial practices of priests and nuns, and cautions against creating a dichotomy between political non-Catholic radicals, and elderly deferential Catholics. In this way, the deeper history of Catholicism in the region, both politically and spiritually, is needed to properly contextualize local efforts at decolonization in the 1970s, and the ways Catholicism continues to be negotiated by community members. Understanding the colonial power of the Church as well as the deep Catholic faith of the majority of local residents in the early 1970s is necessary to make sense of the conflict that accompanied efforts to move towards local control. Following a brief historiographical discussion, this section consists of two chapters. Chapter six provides a narrative of the events associated with the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, considers the colonial context that local people were responding to, and explores the conflict within more recent historical consciousness. The next chapter focuses more explicitly on the relationship between faith and decolonization by complicating the positionality of individuals involved in the takeover, before a broader consideration of how Catholicism continues to be apparent throughout the region in Marian shrines, appearances, and pilgrimages, as well as the return of public sweat lodges in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak.

The takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse intersects with significant prairie figures in Indigenous efforts at decolonization and is an early example of Indigenous control over Indigenous education during the 1970s that has not been recognized in academic scholarship on decolonization, Indigenous education, or Indigenous politics during the 1970s.² Even John

² See for example, Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Toronto: General Pub, 1975); Within the context of Metis politics see: John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2007); Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Gerhard Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Metis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Scholarship on Indigenous politics often focuses on particular provinces, individuals, or events. More generally scholarship theorizing and considering decolonization tends to position Christianity as counter to Indigeneity. See for example, Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks:*

Weinstein's *Quiet Revolution West*, a book that focuses on the growth of Metis politics since the 1960s and figures like Jim Sinclair (the first president of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan) and Howard Adams, scarcely mentions events in Ile-a-la-Crosse or the regional differences within the young Metis Society of Saskatchewan.³ In fact, leaders like Jim Durocher (MSS treasurer during the school takeover) are only mentioned in the context of being a lieutenant of Sinclair, another example of scholarship that glosses over the provincial north.

The movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse complements efforts in other communities to move towards Indigenous control over Indigenous education in Canada and the United States, as well as broader efforts to organize politically and work towards decolonization. Figures involved in the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse, such as Dr. Howard Adams, Jim Sinclair, and Douglas Cardinal have themselves contributed to scholarly understandings of decolonization in Canada and have been the subjects of academic study. Dr. Howard Adams was inspired by Franz Fanon, but advocated for non-violent political action. His work in Ile-a-la-Crosse can be seen as an example of putting his ideas into practice. Similarly, the takeover in Ile-a-la-Crosse marked one of the early political acts of the newly formed Metis Society of Saskatchewan in the provincial north. More generally, the MSS faced resistance in northern Catholic communities when it tried to decolonize by opposing the Church, rather than working with the Church. This limits scholarship that focuses on Howard Adams' theories outlined in *Prisoner of Grass* equating Christianity with being colonized, without considering the on-the-ground realities associated with efforts to apply those theories. The following chapters and their demonstration of how Catholicism continued to be negotiated by community members considers narratives of local control beyond the voices of the political leadership that dominate the existing scholarship on Indigenous political movements and decolonization during the late twentieth century.

Turning to the regional historiography, works by anthropologist Philip Spaulding and historian David Quiring consider the time period leading up to the school takeover. Their scholarship helps to situate changes taking place as families moved into concentrated settlements like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, while Saskatchewan government departments like the DNR played increasing colonial roles in the region. I use these sources primarily to situate and

Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014).

³ Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West*.

contextualize the events and historical consciousness that are the focus of these chapters. As I have argued in earlier chapters, Quiring does not pay satisfactory attention to the continuing significance of Catholicism within the region. The conflict within the community regarding the role of the Church suggests how local people continued to negotiate Indigeneity, Catholicism, and social change in various ways during the 1970s. The continuing role of Catholic faith in more recent efforts at healing, apparent in Marian shrines, appearances, and pilgrimages further challenges the notion of a “toppled” Church.⁴

Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie devotes considerable attention to the take over of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse in his book *Drumming from Within*. He describes the topic as a “somewhat still painful subject” that he includes for two reasons: to bring attention to the need for a historian to write an objective account of what he describes as momentous events that “shook this community so deeply for so many years,” and to reflect on the “fundamental if painful lessons so that we as a church can learn what happened.”⁵ I primarily use Lavoie’s work as a primary source to understand the Church’s position and understanding of these events. His book is also one that some of the community members I have worked with have engaged with, so there are conversations between his interpretation and local historical consciousness that I document in the following chapters. My work begins to answer the archbishop’s call for a historical account of the events of the 1970s. I also take a broader look at Catholicism and the decolonizing process to consider the events associated with local control with a brief discussion of continued efforts to heal through aspects of Catholicism, ranging from intercessory prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary to incorporating the Lord’s Prayer into sweat lodges.

There is little scholarship about Indigenous Marian devotion during the second half of the twentieth century.⁶ I previously co-authored an article with historian MacKinley Darlington about the Marian shrines and appearances in Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁷ That article primarily built on historiography about the Metis⁸ as well as a small body of scholarship relating to prophet

⁴ David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), p. 254.

⁵ Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie, *Drumming from Within: Tales of Hope and Faith from Canada’s North* (Novalis, 2009) p. 68.

⁶ Within English Canadian historiography. The Francophone historiography was beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁷ Amanda Fehr and MacKinley Darlington, “Encountering Mary: Apparitions, Roadside Shrines, and the Métis of the Westside,” *Saskatchewan History* (2010), pp. 29-40.

⁸ I have noted throughout this dissertation the lack of scholarship considering Metis and Indigenous Christianity during the twentieth century generally, and particularly in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

movements and other pilgrimages.⁹ Chapter seven picks up the argument from my previous article in its suggestion that Marian shrines and appearances can be seen as efforts at community healing in response to issues such as suicide and alcohol abuse that are associated with colonization. My argument here is developed further to focus on the relationship between Marian devotion and the continued significance of Catholicism amidst efforts at decolonization, including healing, continuing family traditions, and the significance of Church acceptance of Indigenous spiritual practices such as sweat lodges in local efforts at regaining those traditions. As has been noted earlier in this dissertation, there is little academic scholarship relating to Indigenous Christianity during the second half of the twentieth century outside works that focuses on residential schools.¹⁰ I have also benefited more generally from scholarship that considers the return of Indigenous spiritual practices during the second half of the twentieth century, though Catholicism is not the focus of this scholarship.¹¹

As a result my “Encountering Mary” article primarily drew on scholarship focusing on the nineteenth century. See for example: Brenda Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907” (PhD Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 2005). Robert Jarvenpa, “The Development of Pilgrimage in an inter- cultural frontier,” in *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition* (New York: University Press of America, 1990); Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, second edition 2007, first edition 1993); Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

⁹ See for example: Homer Barnett, *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, (New York: Knopf, 1970). Joan Skogan, *Mary of Canada: The Virgin Mary in Canadian Culture, Spirituality, History, and Geography*, (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003); Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age*, (New York: Viking, 1999); and, Marie Romero Cash, *Living Shrines: Home Alters of New Mexico*, (Sante Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1998).

¹⁰ See for example: J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Ian Mosby “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952” *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, XLVI, No. 91 (Mai/May 2013); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939 to 2000: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 1* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queens University Press, 2015);

¹¹ See for example, Chantal Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

Chapter Six

“But at that time with the school we had to be radical, you had to take a hard approach and you knew and I knew that I was pissing off people and they weren’t very happy. And, as an Aboriginal person I thought it wasn’t quite a good thing, especially with the Elders. Oh it was tough, but it was necessary. So I sort of said, ‘well so be it.’ But now they understand, a lot of them will come to me now and say ‘hey, you were right at the time.’”¹

Jim Durocher

Beyond providing a new case study of decolonization and Indigenous political movements to control Indigenous education, this chapter situates local control within the context of an historically Catholic Indigenous community drawing attention to conflicts and challenges associated with efforts to decolonize. Here, local control is not a simple progress narrative from colonization to decolonization, or a celebratory local story about going against the mission, but a process rife with tension and even violence that some individuals continue to avoid speaking about publicly. Since my first visit to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, I have heard varying versions of how the community took control of their own affairs. In the original recountings I heard, the major shift began with the community's takeover of the school, wresting control away from the Catholic Church. This event included a sit-in at the school and fit with narratives of strong local leadership and blockading.² It was not until 2010 amidst local debates about possibly taking the Church to court over the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRRSA) that I learned of the split that took place within the community as a result of the school takeover in the 1970s. Two Elders shared their concerns about tensions in their community over the possibility of court action and their hesitancy to go against the Church. They explained that this type of conflict was not new in their community, and drew several connections to the community takeover of the school from the mission in the 1970s that created divisions in Ile-a-la-Crosse that cut across family lines. Most of the community members I spoke with now recognize the benefits of local control over the school board, but the details of the process are not being passed on within local historical consciousness.

The takeover of the school and the resulting community conflict illustrate how Catholicism and Indigeneity continue to be negotiated during processes of decolonization. I begin this chapter by outlining some of the events that are associated with the takeover before

¹ Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 25 September 2012.

² Amanda Fehr, Field Notes, March 2010, November 2010, March 2011.

contextualizing the movement within northern colonialism. The bulk of the chapter focuses on the varying historical consciousness about the event including: understandings of the takeover as an example of strong leadership critiquing colonialism; situating events within personal narratives of organizing and Metis politics; and interpretations by individuals who have been more hesitant to discuss the takeover and make sense of the conflict through narratives of misunderstanding, humour, and focusing on the later benefits rather than the conflict itself. Building on arguments in earlier chapters, I show how Church authorities used the faith of local community members to try and maintain their control over the school, illustrating the necessity of understanding local faith to make sense of the Church's power. Local understandings of this event illustrate the variety of ways that community members engaged with the takeover according to their own understandings of what it meant to belong to a Catholic community, and if that was a community to which they wanted to belong. Some individuals took radical stances against the Church in their efforts to decolonize; others refused to support movements for local control that they saw as attacking the Church. Still, many local people took more ambiguous stances as they were against the colonial and authoritarian roles of the Church (and others), but wanted to continue belonging to their local Catholic community.

On October 28th, 1972, fire destroyed one wing of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school.³ Many of the Elders that I have interviewed begin narratives of the move for local control with stories of the school burning down, as this event is typically seen as the catalyst setting events in motion.⁴ During my interviews some did not initially respond to my questions about taking over the school and I had to rephrase them to be about when the school burned down in the seventies.⁵ In November of 1972, Jerry Hammersmith of the newly formed Department of Northern

³ The following description of events associated with the movement from local control is taken from interviews that I conducted with community members as well as documents from the take over provided by Elder Tony Durocher. In particular a document drafted by the temporary education committee provided a brief record of events in the community to inform people in Ile-a-la-Crosse about the development of local involvement in operating the school. "Draft letter to residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the temporary education committee," 20 February 1973, copy of letter provided by Tony Durocher. I have also consulted newspaper sources, notably an article originally published in the *Globe and Mail* that included interviews with individuals from various sides in the conflict. The school take over was also prominently featured in *New Breed Magazine*, the publication of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan. This was a heavily politicized discourse that used the conflict to articulate a broader Indigenous identity tied to the American Indian Movement and led the call for increased activism and political awareness.

⁴ See for example: Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014; Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse 25 October 2014; Marie Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 22 October 2013; Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012; Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014.

⁵ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014; Eliza Aubichon, 16 October 2012.

Saskatchewan (DNS) contacted the Metis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS) to suggest Ile-a-la-Crosse become more fully involved in replacing the school and determining the type of local education provided. As in other historical examples of Indigenous communities moving towards local control, local World War Two (WWII) veterans and young politicians were leaders in this movement.⁶ During my interviews the roles of the MSS, DNS, as well as local leaders was often unclear and inconsistent.⁷ For example, in Max Morin's⁸ recounting, Howard Adams and the DNS, which had a mandate to move towards northern control over their own governance, offered support when the "opportune time fell when people started rumbling a little bit in Ile-a-la-Crosse. They came and said well, maybe this is the start of that whole vision that they might have had to give control to the people of the north."⁹ The varying interpretations of how and when outside organizations like the MSS and DNS came to be involved are of further significance as those against local control often based their arguments on the notion that the movement was being driven by outsiders.

On January 9th 1973, representatives of the Department of Government Services and DNS determined that \$350,000 would be provided to build a new school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. The following day a public meeting was held by the northern school board where it was decided that the Local Community Authority would hold a yes/no community vote to determine four issues: community control of rebuilding the school, having a high school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, having more trades training and adult education in the school, and finally, and most significantly for this discussion, community control over education. The vote was held on January 29th 1973 and 74% of voters turned out to pass all four resolutions.¹⁰ Sixty-four percent voted in favour of residents

⁶ "Draft letter to residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the temporary education committee," 20 February 1973, copy of letter provided by Tony Durocher. In some ways events in Ile-a-la-Crosse were similar to takeovers, and movements towards local control in other communities in the early 1970s such as Blue Quills in Alberta and Coqualeetza in British Columbia.

⁷ See for example, Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014; Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014; Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014.

⁸ Max was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse. His father was Vital Morin and his mother Therese Desjarlais. Max was the mayor in 2006 when I first came to Ile-a-la-Crosse, and when we met in 2014 he was working at GDI. I only conducted one interview with Max that lasted over two hours. Max began by providing a detailed description of the events that took place in the early seventies. He drew attention to the significance of the split and did not hesitate to discuss divisions within the community. Max framed his understanding in terms of his own political career and goals of increased self-government in Ile-a-la-Crosse. So for him, the take over in the 1970s was a catalyst for developments like GDI, and local control over the hospital in Ile-a-la-Crosse (which he initiated during his time as mayor). See also Appendix A.

⁹ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

¹⁰ "Draft letter to residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the temporary education committee," 20 February 1973, copy of letter provided by Tony Durocher.

being able to control, plan, design, and construct a new school and fifty-nine percent voted for the statement, “the local community will set up their own committees to have control of all education.”¹¹ On February 8th 1973 DNS called a public meeting to elect a temporary education committee to work with the government until the election of a school board.¹²

Local people (particularly those on the temporary education committee) worked with the DNS to make arrangements for the move towards local control. The only hint of challenges in the 1973 document was the statement, “As with any undertaking of importance, there will be difficulties to overcome from time to time. We hope that everyone in Ile-a-la-Crosse will share their thoughts and work together in friendship.”¹³ In a newspaper clipping from the time – with the headline “Natives Win School Control Vote,” it was noted that the temporary committee was made up of eight Metis people, and that the transfer of local control was made possible by recent provincial legislation.¹⁴ The new school, designed by Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal, ended over a century of Church control over education and residential schooling in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Significantly, this new school, an Indigenous structure with round spaces for Indigenous education, was named for a former priest in the community – Father Rossignol—suggesting more complicated relationships between Catholicism and Indigeneity amidst processes of decolonizing.

It was after the establishment of local control that conflict within the community became apparent. Between the election of the first school board in 1973 and 1975, control of the board shifted back and forth between those in favour of local control and those who supported the mission. Journalist Dennis Gruending in his article for *The Globe and Mail*, republished in Catholic magazines like *Prairie Messenger* in 1975, summarized the conflict: “The principal hired by the first board has been fired, rehired, then fired again; parents on either side have had their children boycott classes; the school has been occupied; a temporary school ran for a time at the mission, and a stabbing death in the community on Feb. 12 is alleged to have resulted from an argument about the school.”¹⁵ Supporters of local control occupied the school for several days – an event that is brought up more generally in discussions of the school takeover. A temporary

¹¹ “Rossignol School, Ile-a-la-Crosse-Situation,” *New Breed*, February/March 1975, p.11. <http://Desjarlais.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05112.pdf>.

¹² “Draft letter to residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the temporary education committee,” 20 February 1973, copy of letter provided by Tony Durocher.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Natives Win School Control Vote,” Article clipping provided by Tony Durocher.

¹⁵ Dennis Gruending, “Dispute Disrupts Ile-a-la-Crosse Community,” *Globe and Mail* republished in *Prairie Messenger*, Saskatchewan Catholic Weekly. vol 52, no. 45 April 13 1975.

school was established at the mission in November 1974 when 120 children were withdrawn from the school. In January, principal Adams and the vice principal were fired and many of the remaining teachers resigned afterwards. By March of 1975, most of the students had returned to the school and fourteen teachers were recruited from across western Canada.¹⁶

Those in favour of local control emphasised the racist and colonial history of outsiders controlling the community, and those against local control blamed outside agitators like the DNS and the MSS. Father James Fiori, a local priest in Ile-a-la-Crosse, criticized the MSS for its left-wing politics and rhetoric that he saw against the Church. He also brought up the historic role of the Church in the region providing services and social supports in the absence of the provincial and federal governments, a theme that I have noted throughout this dissertation. Gruending writes:

Father Fiori asks where the MSS and the provincial government have been all these years. It was the Oblate fathers, he says, who built a mission 130 years ago to serve the Metis and Indians who followed the Churchill River into Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse to trade with the white man. It was the mission that ‘was begged’ in 1928 to take over the hospital built by Indians Affairs the year before, and it was the mission that built a new hospital in 1958 ‘when the government was not interested.’¹⁷

Here, the role of the Church in filling the perceived gap left by the provincial and federal governments to provide social welfare supports and education results in Fiori’s anger at the province’s sudden interest in the region and defensiveness towards what he saw as anti-Church rhetoric from the MSS. To Fiori, the movement for local control was against the Church.

Fiori’s rhetoric included a paternalistic skepticism about the capacity of local Metis to run their own institutions.¹⁸ Bishop Sylvain in *Drumming from Within* also emphasizes the role of militant outside agitators, notably the MSS and the DNS, noting “political influence from the outside had its own agenda, was not above manipulation, and encouraged militancy on the part of the local Metis societies to achieve their own political ends.”¹⁹ Lavoie later goes on to describe how resistance by the Church to what he calls “winds of change,” caused some activists to call for getting rid of the Church, which in turn further justified Church resolve to resist change. The

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie, *Drumming from Within: Tales of Hope and Faith from Canada’s North* (Novalis, 2009), p. 63.

archbishop acknowledges that many individuals were not against the Church, but simply wanted more of a voice in local issues.²⁰

Gruending also includes comments by local Metis leaders Jim Favel and Vital Morin, who were involved in advocating for local control.²¹ Both of these men drew attention to the realities of colonialism and racism that led them to advocate for change. For example, Jim Favel explains, “a lot of teachers who came up here in the past were racists. They came to put in time and save money, and they lived apart. This new group was not like that. They invited native people to their parties and they came to our houses.”²² They also clarified that the move for local control was coming from local people. Vital Morin commented on the Church’s accusation that the movement was driven by outside agitators and communists.²³ Morin is quoted, “I say no one pushed us into this. The only thing DNS did, it told us there were possibilities for local control because it was one of the department’s policies. Mclean [an HBC employee] and the mission agree with local control if they have control. They say they are local people too.”²⁴ Finally, Morin noted tensions within the community resulting from both the religiosity of some community members as well as the continuing power of the mission as an employer. He elaborates on the Church’s influence in the village explaining, “many of the Metis are deeply religious, and for more secular reason that the mission’s 35-bed hospital is the largest employer in a village that has depended mainly on welfare since the furs and fish disappeared.”²⁵ Favel and Morin recognize both the need for local control, but also some of the reasons why attaining it resulted in conflict. At the end of the article, Morin explained, “the politics here is still pretty much alive and we are split pretty well in half this town.”²⁶

Building on Favel and Morin’s accounts in 1975, the retellings that I have heard all acknowledge the context of colonialism in the region and outsider control as a cause for the takeover and a reason for its significance. Before the school burned down in 1972, outsiders ran much of the town. Colonialism, paternalism, racism, and judgment defined many aspects of the

²⁰ Ibid, p. 65.

²¹ I met Jim Favel in 2006, as one of the political leaders supporting the Metis Atlas work. I was unable to interview him about his involvement during the school takeover, though I did interviews with his wife Marie and son Duane. Vital Morin passed away in 2001. I interviewed Vital’s sons Max and Lawrence.

²² Dennis Gruending, “Dispute Disrupts Ile-a-la-Crosse Community.”

²³ The priest’s preoccupation with communism can be contextualized by the doctors’ strike of 1962 in Saskatchewan.

²⁴ Dennis Gruending, “Dispute Disrupts Ile-a-la-Crosse Community.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

relationship between these outsiders and the local Indigenous community. As anthropologist Philip Spaulding observed during the 1960s, “When its functions are enumerated, the DNR office might well be called a colonial office.”²⁷ These observations are echoed in a variety of sources including the ethnographic record from the 1960s, sources from the archdiocese, as well as those from the MSS. The movement of individuals into concentrated settlements like Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1960s and early 1970s (as family clusters from different areas around the lake were relocated into one settlement) was accompanied by a separation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies.²⁸ The CCF encouraged people to move into centralized communities, rather than family settlements around the lake in order to gain amenities like power and running water.²⁹ Ile-a-la-Crosse was new as a centralized community, and outsiders primarily ran it from the DNR, the RCMP, the HBC, and the mission. Local Indigenous people were excluded from positions of power and there was little socializing between the Indigenous majority and the small but powerful non-Indigenous minority.

The mission was the only outside organization that regularly hired Indigenous people, though not in leadership roles. I have worked with Elder Tony Durocher on a couple of projects, and we have had multiple formal interviews and informal conversations.³⁰ Tony has answered my questions about the school takeover, and where people go to pray, but also shared stories that are

²⁷ Philip Spaulding, “The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse,” (PhD Thesis, University of Washington, 1970), p. 26.

²⁸ Quiring, p. xvi; p. 27. Philip Spaulding describes 806 Metis and fifty-one white residents within the Ile-a-la-Crosse conservation district at the end of 1964. By that time approximately 600 people lived within the boundary of the village of Ile-a-la-Crosse. He also describes how more than half the number of whites were connected to the mission which included two ordained priests, five nuns, two teachers and three nurses, the doctor and his wife, three lay nurses, and six lay teachers. Of the other non-Indigenous people at that time three were connected to the HBC (the manager, his wife, and a clerk) and the rest worked for the provincial government including two DNR conservation officers, their wives and children, two RCMP officers and their families, and a Co-op management advisor and his wife. This marked a significant shift since 1951 in terms of the local presence of the DNR and RCMP, as well as a significant increase in mission staff as a result of the hospital and the school. Spaulding, “The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse,” p. 59. Spaulding’s argument about Metis social disintegration is at best the pejorative work of a social scientist conducting research during the 1960s. Spaulding spent time in the village of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1961, the summer of 1962, two months during the summer of 1965, and part of 1967-78.

²⁹ Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte: Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004) Tape 1, transcript, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

³⁰ I first met Tony through a community-mapping project. Tony has generously agreed to answer my questions about several topics: fiddle music and dancing, the significance of local place names, as well as my doctoral work. For my dissertation we have had several conversations about faith, praying, Tony’s life, bullshitting, and the takeover of the school. I had originally interviewed Tony in October 2013 about the take over. That recording was lost, and Tony agreed to do a second interview about the topic. I have noted elsewhere that for some community members this is a topic that is not shared. The fact that I interviewed Tony twice on the same topic may have factored into his retelling. Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

of interest to him like his work on the road crews and his taxi business. Tony outlined the significance of the mission in Ile-a-la-Crosse, explaining:

That's where the jobs were, the hospital and the church, the mission had cattle and gardens, and of course they had to heat the hospital so people were cutting wood, and then they had to have somebody feed the cows, milk the cows and the wages were not that good, but that's where the work was. Cause the Hudson's Bay at that time used to bring in their own workers, so they didn't have that. Like when I was growing up in Beauval I never seen a local working at the Bay cause always either a Scotsman or somebody from down south, and then the RCMP nobody worked there. And the DNR it was strangers there too. And that's where the power was, the mission, the Hudson's Bay, the RCMP and the DNR.³¹

Archbishop Lavoie recognized the colonial and paternalistic attitudes of the Church that combined with influence over older faithful members of their congregation: "On the part of the Church, unfortunately, it must be admitted that the attitude had become paternalistic and colonial mixed in with a strain of cultural superiority. Added to that was a good deal of power, influence and control over the older people and the Church faithful."³²

Ironically, as the mission stopped boarding students at the residential school, families had to move to town so their children could go to school. Tony Durocher shared with me that some people continued to live across the lake into the seventies, at which time most people moved to town and did not move back, something that he attributed to generational differences as well as the closing of the residential school. To Tony, old people loved living around the lake but younger people wanted something different. Similarly, with the closing of the residences at the mission, people had to move to town. Tony explained, "Before that when the convent was there, they'd send the children to the convent. And once the convent go they had to live in town."³³ The change from boarding school to day school within the context of the history of residential schools could be seen as decolonizing; however, in the provincial north, families moving to town separated them from traditional lands and economies making individuals more dependent on the provincial government.³⁴

³¹ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

³² Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*, pp. 64-65.

³³ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

³⁴ Ibid. Tony did not recall when exactly the convent closed, as he was young and focused on feeding his family at that time. The history of the John the Baptiste Parish notes that the convent officially closed in 1976. "The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years," Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/rcindex.html>.

Accounts of the takeover tend to focus on the role of the mission, even though a range of outsiders are identified as part of the colonial power structure that community members were responding to. In my interview with Max Morin, the son of Vital Morin who played a leading role in the school takeover, Max noted the role of the provincial government in separating people along status lines and using services and welfare to make people dependent. Max's narrative of how the government imposed divisions and dependency as part of colonialism in the region relates to discussions in chapter three about the influence of treaty status on kinship connections within the region. He explained:

But we were a proud people and independent people. We had cattle, the Elders had cattle, they had big gardens and they survived. They didn't depend on social services or the government. Or anybody. And there was no such thing as First Nations and Metis we were surviving together. We'd hunt, trap, and live together. And we prayed together, we fished together so until government came over here and they started saying you're First Nations and your Metis we started looking at each other funny. Government came actually to split us. And then provincial government came over here and started giving people social assistance they call it. Welfare, social assistance... and they made people dependent. And with that dependency came the social problems.³⁵

To Max, the movement for local control is a narrative of a proud and independent people moving away from dependency imposed by the provincial and federal governments. Several other community members also drew attention to the actions of the provincial government in colonizing the north.³⁶ Max suggests the role of the provincial and federal governments in colonizing the north and the significance of prayer historically in bringing people in the region together. Nonetheless, recountings of the school takeover by Max and others tend to focus on going against the mission, not the province.

Teachers working at the mission-run school prior to the takeover held attitudes of cultural superiority. Spaulding explains teachers "have taken a resolute stand against the 'bad home environment.' They have advised parents against 'bannock breakfasts,' 'late – night drinking parties,' and an assortment of 'immoral acts', which, in the teachers' view ill-prepare children."³⁷ Max Morin identified this critique of students eating bannock for breakfast as a catalyst that led to the movement for local control. He stated, "there was a little controversy that was started by one of the local priests saying that the children when they get up in the morning

³⁵ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

³⁶ Ibid; Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 25 September 2012.

³⁷ Spaulding, "The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse," p. 114.

they're lucky if they have bannock and tea. That sort of rose a lot of people, 'who the hell are you to say stuff like that.' People were mad, a lot of people were trying hard to feed their kids."³⁸ The outside judgment of what children were eating provided incentive for the school takeover. As Max explained, "People said if that's the way they think about us, maybe we should look at taking control over our own education system because everybody seems to have control over us and the Church and whatever were running the school."³⁹ As in other recountings, the Church is positioned as the primary colonizing agent, rather than the province. Most individuals, including Max, more broadly identified non-Indigenous outsiders as colonizers, and local control as making sure the Indigenous majority had control over decision-making.⁴⁰

Between 1972 and 1975 the coverage of the school takeover in the MSS publication *New Breed* shifted from focusing on the movement for local control as a response to colonialism to the forcible takeover of the school from the mission. The first articles appeared in 1973, wherein the magazine described the conflict as one between the colonized and colonizers, stating, "the system as it now stands gives complete control of the educational system to the grasping hands of the white people. This is one way a minority of whites can dominate a Native community."⁴¹ Reports in *New Breed* celebrated the successful plebiscite in favour of local control as a moment "breaking the paternalistic chains the government bureaucrats had on them."⁴² These earlier reports focus more broadly on colonialism in the region, not only the mission. By the 1975 publication, the focus shifted to the conflict with the mission.⁴³ Missing in the *New Breed* articles was the complex and varying local perspectives about the significance of the movement for local control and the continuing relationship between local people and the Catholic Church.

³⁸ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ For example Max Morin provided a more detailed explanation of what he meant by local control. He explained, "What I mean by local control is people from the community outside of the transients, whatever you want to call them, the priests, and the nuns, and the doctors, or whatever that come here to work. Outside of that where we have a say in what we do, where we select our leadership. We select our leaders through a Municipal Election Act, through the School Board Act, and right now because we're a majority, majority of the people in both school division and municipal division, municipal government are Aboriginal, some First Nations and Metis." Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁴¹ "Ile-a-La-Crosse Break Bureaucratic Bonds," *New Breed*, March 1973, p. 1-2, <http://Desjarlais.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/04209>.

⁴² "Ile-a-la-Crosse Break Bureaucratic Bonds," p. 2.

⁴³ Rossignol School, Ile-a-la-Crosse-Situation, " *New Breed*, February/March 1975, p.11. <http://Desjarlais.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05112.pdf>.



Figure 6.1: From *New Breed*, March 1973.

From the school burning down in 1972, to the establishment of local control in 1973 to the split within the community over the role of the Church, the movement for local control illustrates the challenges faced by a Catholic Indigenous community amidst local efforts at decolonization. There is little space for narratives of these complicated processes within the current historiography or even the dominant local historical consciousness that prefers a simpler story of achieving local control- where local Metis leaders stood up against the Church and were ultimately successful. Stories that I initially heard in Ile-a-la-Crosse about this event tended to emphasize the takeover as an example of Metis leadership and activism in Ile-a-la-Crosse— placing the community at the forefront of Indigenous rights, activism, and within a specific narrative of Metis politics. The takeover of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse is an event recognized by many locals as a pivotal moment in their history, though several people remain hesitant to discuss details. Some of the individuals I have interviewed indicated that this is not a story that is being passed on to their children and grandchildren.

The original narrative of the school take over that was shared with me was one of community building and activism. A community member who was a student in the 1970s noted the importance of this event, where the people of Ile-a-la-Crosse protested and created their own school division. She explained that it was community veterans returning from the Second World War who first critiqued Church control over the town, but made no mention of community conflict or divisions that occurred during the struggle.⁴⁴ More generally, community members

⁴⁴ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

have depicted Ile-a-la-Crosse as a politically active Metis community and a leader in the northwest with the takeover of the school serving as the prime example. This activism is seen as a point of strength and pride, and some community members have argued the need to return to blockading and protesting today.⁴⁵ Vital Morin, the WWII veteran credited with leading the takeover highlighted these sentiments in an interview conducted by the Gabriel Dumont Institute. He explains that after the war, “I was looked at as a community leader. I was able to help the community to grow. I was able to help with a lot of things. I was elected for 16 years to the town council and 10 years to the school board. I decided to give it up and let other people do it. We established our own school board and took over running our own school.”⁴⁶

Male veterans and individuals with experiences outside of the north are typically identified as the local leaders of the movement for local control. Like others, Max Morin identified his father’s experience as a WWII veteran as a factor in the leadership role he played in the community. Max explained:

A lot of the people who came back from the world wars, from the army actually eventually became leaders in the community because they were exposed to different situations...in the army all of a sudden they were all treated equally and in the old days if you were an Indian you couldn’t go in the bars and drink. But if you had an army uniform, you could go in the bar and drink.⁴⁷

This complements observations made elsewhere about the significance of veterans in Indigenous politics during the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Like other Indigenous veterans, Vital fought for the veteran’s benefits that the government denied him until he passed away in 2000.

In terms of the school takeover, the primary issue for Vital was that the current system was not working for local students. Due to his position in the community, others were willing to follow his lead. His son Max elaborated, “And so he got involved in that process and a lot of people rallied behind him and said ‘okay let’s go.’ And so people that never talked about or had never been involved in politics started coming out, say, ‘hey, maybe its about time that we took over our own school division.’”⁴⁹ Tony Durocher was willing to support Vital, who he described

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Vital Morin, GDI Oral History Interviews, Transcript, Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://Desjarlais.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/01207>.

⁴⁷ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁴⁸ See for example, *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives*, edited by P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Craig Leslie Mantle and R. Scott Sheffield (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007).

⁴⁹ Max Morin, 15 July 2014. Current Metis National Council President, originally from Buffalo Narrows, Clément Chartier also noted the significance of veterans and people with experience outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse in

as “a pretty smart man,” though Tony remained more critical of the DNS and the MSS.⁵⁰ Vital can be seen to have added support and legitimacy to the work of younger organizers who were more actively involved in the Metis Society, such as Jim Durocher and Jim Favel.⁵¹

Others who I spoke with described the leaders as visionary because of their willingness to push for local control even though it was controversial within the community. I interviewed Duane Favel in 2014, whose father Jim Favel and uncle Jonas advocated for local control. Duane’s mother Marie (nee Durocher), depicts herself as a churchgoer who was caught in-between family and friends during the conflict. At the time of our interview, Duane was the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Duane explained:

We had a lot of strong visionary type of leaders at the time, who weren’t afraid to take a stand...When it comes to protecting the community or moving it forward, and believing what direction the community should take.... There was a lot of criticism towards them, and certainly you’ve got to give them a lot of credit for having that type of courage and vision to lead the community in the direction that they did.⁵²

Here, Duane’s description of visionary leaders with the courage to face criticism fits within his discussion of other strong Metis leaders like Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel.⁵³ In response to my query whether or not this criticism primarily came from the Church, Duane clarified, “and people who supported the Church, so yeah, really divided the community.”⁵⁴

Beyond veterans like Vital Morin and other leaders, Ile-a-la-Crosse is depicted as a leading community because of the move for local control. A local report completed for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1993 noted: “It is still the only community in the north with an independent, community controlled school -- achieved despite tremendous resistance from the church and from the government. The school serves as a symbol of the commitment of

leading the movement. He explained, “they saw the world, they came back and saw what was happening with them and he (Vital) was part of the people behind this whole movement to wrest power away from the white establishment.” Clément Chartier, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ottawa, 14 January 2014. For more information about Clément Chartier, see Appendix A.

⁵⁰ Tony Durocher, November 2014.

⁵¹ For example, Jim Durocher explained the significance of Vital Morin’s support: “Oh yes, we had people like Jonas Favel and then we had an Elder with us on our side and that was Vital Morin, he was a respected Elder you must have heard his name. He was right 100% behind us. Said, ‘Jimmy you’re absolutely right we need to do something,’ and that really gave me a boost to see people like that so a lot of those types of people understood, people who have been out. Because, he [Vital] was a prisoner of war in Germany during the Second World War. So his perspective of looking at things was a little bit different.” Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

⁵² Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014. For more information about Duane see Appendix A.

⁵³ See my deeper consideration of Riel in Ile-a-la-Crosse historical consciousness in chapter two.

⁵⁴ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

the community to struggle for the right to run its own institutions.”⁵⁵ Significantly in this recounting, the community as a whole is seen to have struggled against the Church and the government. The conflict within the community is not mentioned. More recently, Max Morin echoed the idea of Ile-a-la-Crosse as a model for local control while recognizing that there were difficulties that outsiders do not acknowledge. He explained, “A lot of the communities look at Ile-a-la-Crosse and say you guys are in a leadership role we’d like to take control, some people have tried to have local control but it’s hard, it’s not as easy as they think.”⁵⁶

The takeover of the school is more broadly significant for Metis political organizing. Current president of the Métis National Council (MNC), Clément Chartier, who is originally from Buffalo Narrows and attended the Residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, emphasized the broader context and significance of the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse: “And so what happened in Ile-a-la-Crosse really didn’t happen in isolation either, there was a lot of other things happening. You’d have to look at the whole and so, but it did have a big impact. Because it surprised the Metis community, up against the establishment, particularly the Church. And there was a break in the media and it all helped to build this empowerment of the people themselves.”⁵⁷ Like others, Clem draws attention to the significance of standing up against the colonial or white settler establishment, and places the Church at the forefront of this. His focus is on both the role of the narrative in a broader Metis political context, and the significance of the success of the takeover in empowering individuals and organizations, rather than on local conflict over varying understandings of Catholic faith and the role of the Church within Indigenous communities. Like other politicians whom I interviewed for this project, Clem situates the takeover within a broader history of Metis organizing and his own political career.

Indigenous activism in Canada became increasingly visible nationally during the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁸ In 1967, the northern and southern provincial Metis and non-status Indian groups in

⁵⁵ Bob Bouvier, Carlos Daigneault, Dwayne Desjarlais, Lillian Mclean, Jolene Roy Marie, Symes-Grehan, “Ile A La Crosse Community Study For The Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples: Governance Study October 1993,” The guiding committee for the report included: Buckley Belanger, Alex Bouvier, Dale Daigneault, Antoinette Desjarlais, Irene Desjarlais, Marie Adele Desjarlais, Jim Favel, and Max J. Morin. Accessed June 9 2017 http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-41-33-eng.pdf.

⁵⁶ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁵⁷ Clément Chartier, 14 January 2014.

⁵⁸ Metis and non-status political organizing has received less historiographical attention. See Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2007); Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Gerhard

Saskatchewan united, taking the name the Métis Society of Saskatchewan—though operations remained based in the south. The MSS was influenced by the American Indian Movement, the Black Panthers, and ideas of decolonization. Recommended reading for members included Harold Cardinal’s *The Unjust Society* and Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. During the 1970s MSS leaders like Dr. Howard Adams and Jim Sinclair were actively working to define rights for Metis and non-status people, and create and define provincial and national Métis identities.⁵⁹

Individuals from Ile-a-la-Crosse like Jim Durocher were heavily involved in expanding the MSS’s work into northwestern Saskatchewan under the mentorship of Howard Adams and Jim Sinclair. When Jim shared his observation with Dr. Adams and Sinclair that “there’s got to be something wrong here” in terms of students not graduating from the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, they responded “that’s because we don’t have control.”⁶⁰ This observation resulted in a realization for Jim:

And it dawned on me how many things we have no control over, our own institutions you know. I looked at the school board and there’s a Hudson Bay manager sitting there, a priest sitting there, an RCMP guy sitting there, a conservation officer sitting there, social worker sitting there. I said, ‘none of these people belong here, they’re all foreigners,’ you know, I mean they’re all not from here. So that didn’t make a whole lot of sense to me and that’s when the big school issue came up.⁶¹

I met Jim Durocher, or Jimmy D, for coffee at the restaurant in Ile-a-la-Crosse to talk about his involvement in the takeover.⁶² Jim attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and joined

Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Metis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

⁵⁹ This is before the inclusion of Metis as one of the three groups of Aboriginal people in the 1982 constitution, which has problematically become the basis of defining “Metisness” in much of the scholarship on Canadian Metis history since 1982.

⁶⁰ Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² I interviewed Jim for an earlier project on music and dance, and spoke with him informally a couple of times. I was most often directed to speak with the male politicians and blockaders or the descendants of WWII veterans and community leaders like Vital Moran as other community members indicated that these individuals would have the most knowledge about the movement for local control. Beyond this, these individuals were the most willing to speak on a relatively recent and at times fragmenting event in the community’s history. While I was aware that some women had been involved and self-identify as activists, I have been less successful at incorporating their perspectives. Women who participated as radicals for the most part have left the community or did not want to be interviewed on the record. I am aware that their perspectives differ from the male leaders I have spoken with, and they have shared some critiques of political leaders with me. In many ways their experiences differ from the male activists. They typically did not follow Jim Sinclair, Howard Adams, or Harry Daniels around and seem to have found mentorship outside of provincial Indigenous organizations. Some of the women no longer live in Ile-a-la-Crosse, proving a challenge for my community-focused study. More generally I have found community members

the Canadian air force at the recommendation of the priest and RCMP after getting into some trouble. After a year at university in Bellingham Washington, he moved back to Ile-a-la-Crosse, got married and worked various jobs, including conservation, before becoming involved in politics. Jim was involved in the Metis Society in the late 1960s and early 1970s and spent much of his career in Metis politics. The Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) interviewed him along with other leaders, like the late Jim Sinclair, about Metis politics in Saskatchewan. Jim Durocher has a ready smile, and can be seen with his guitar singing songs in Cree at local events. His political career took him away from Ile-a-la-Crosse for several years. He has recently been working for the community to have the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement addressed. Our interview about the conflict in the 1970s tended to focus on politics – though Jim did explain how upsetting it was to his mother and relatives when the priests threatened not to bury him in the local cemetery.⁶³

Jim framed his recounting of the takeover within his own political career and a broader narrative of Metis organizing in the north. Acknowledging the roles of Adams and Sinclair as mentors and leaders, his own work and that of other local people remained central to his narrative. Jim described the challenge of organizing in the north within the context of colonialism and regional isolation. The absence of roads and ready access to communication made organizing in the north more difficult than organizing in the south. Jim began working for the Metis Society in the late sixties hitching rides with conservation officers and social workers to neighboring communities. It was a challenge for him to communicate with Sinclair in the south without interference from the DNR. Jim explains:

It was a very tough thing to fight because they controlled everything. They controlled the welfare, the law, the planes, the, you know the radiogram, transportation, communication. They controlled everything. And here I am all by myself trying to fight this huge... it was mind-boggling at times, but we were able to do it. We got people to stick together and commit themselves that were trying to do the best that we could.⁶⁴

whose stories do not fit with the established community narrative are more hesitant to share their stories with me, especially if they relate to the split in the community or continuing divisions. In contrast to the male organizers for whom the take over was a significant event in their life history and political careers, for their female counterparts this was a moment where their stories may not fit with the established narrative, leading to senses of exclusion and hesitancy to publicly share their stories. Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁶³ Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Here, Jim does not simply focus on the mission but also the DNR and the provincial government more generally.

One of the earliest movements in the north that Jim Durocher and the MSS organized was called ‘flour power.’ The Metis Society claimed that people in the north were hungry and asked the national farmers union to donate flour to be transported to Ile-a-la-Crosse on the west side and to La Ronge on the east side. They invited the press to follow and Sinclair and Adams went to the media saying people were hungry. According to Jim, “A lot of people got pissed off at us because people were not really hungry.”⁶⁵ He explained that ‘flour power’ was symbolic and a tool used to pressure the government. As a result:

They [the federal government] sent two Cabinet Ministers up this coming year and of course as soon as that happened we said we’ve got no housing and it was serious, we didn’t have any housing. So we need you to provide us with a serious housing program. We’ll run it ourselves, don’t come in here and try and run it yourself. So we had a great time. And then we said we need to organize better, we need to organize more we need some help with economics and you know so it built and finally we were able to get a few and then we got the province involved because we went after the social workers with their attitude and so that’s how it started.⁶⁶

During this earlier movement Jim was willing to anger community members in his pursuit of increased government support and local control. ‘Flour power’ marks the beginning of Jim’s narrative of the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Compared to ‘flour power,’ Jim depicts the takeover of the school as an easier issue to rally people around because, “with the school takeover because the issues were broadly understood, you didn’t have to explain the concept, and the school became a focal point of organizing.”⁶⁷

Jim’s framing of the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse within a longer timeframe of organizing in the north includes a deeper history of Church resistance to Indigenous political organizing in the region. In response to my question whether the priests were supportive of ‘flour power’ Jim replied:

Oh no absolutely not, because they knew what we were doing, they knew. No, I guess a lot of people were scared of those kinds of things. That’s how the priest, the missionaries controlled you, you know, they controlled you with the devil and they controlled you with hell, and purgatory. If you’re not too bad and you know you’re still going to have to go to purgatory, and that scared people you know

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

because that's something you don't understand because it's foreign to an Aboriginal person. Why would you send me to hell?⁶⁸

In addition to Jim's observation that the Church was opposed to earlier efforts at organizing and bringing housing to Ile-a-la-Crosse, his response illustrates how the Church used the faith of local people to maintain its control. Jim creates a dichotomy between Indigeneity and Catholic teachings about hell and purgatory, but the fact that they were used as threats suggests that they were meaningful to many within Jim's own family and community. Understanding both the faith of many local people in Ile-a-la-Crosse as well as the tendency of individuals like Jim and others involved with the Metis Society to dismiss Catholicism as anti-Indigenous, suggests how a split could occur within the community over the school issue. It also explains tensions within local historical consciousness that on the one hand privileges a narrative of taking over the school from the Church and on the other creates hesitancy to discuss the resulting local conflict.

There is a tendency within recountings from those connected to the Metis Society as well as the Church to make sense of the conflict as those who were pro-local control versus those who were pro-Church. To the Church those who were pro-local control were *defacto* seen as anti-Church, and to the MSS those who were against local control were under the influence of the mission. Jim explained that Howard Adams told him early on, "you're going to have to fight in the days ahead because they've [the mission] had control over that place for a long time and they're not going to relinquish it." Jim started meeting with other community members and found others that recognized something was wrong in the community. Over time, little meetings grew into big meetings and bigger meetings and that was when Jim saw a split developing in the community along what he described as pro-Church and anti-Church lines. He explained: "then there was this split developing in the community you could see the split happening, pro-Church and anti-Church, because they considered us anti-Church, but we weren't anti-Church we were just pro the people we wanted people to have a say."⁶⁹

Both Jim Durocher and Max Morin noted how the Church leveraged local faith as a tactic to advocate against local control. Although Jim claimed not to be personally concerned by threats to not be buried within the cemetery, these threats were upsetting to his mother. In Jim's recounting the Church had a "stranglehold" on the Elders in the community and were employing their "usual tactics." He explained:

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

They told me for example in no uncertain terms in a public meeting that I was not going to be buried in the graveyard because I was promoting what the hell they call it, communism or some damn thing, socialism or something. And of course, that's not what I was doing I was trying to have people to have a say...and of course, when the priest said that about me not being buried in the graveyard it didn't bother me too much, but it bothered my parents. So even within my own family, my mother was very upset over that and she cried a few times and I tried to tell her, I tried to explain to her. My dad could understand, he kind of figured 'yeah, you may be right, let's try this,' and 'he's not against the Church, he's not you know.' So I tried to reassure my mom that I was not.⁷⁰

The priest's threat that Jim would not be buried in the graveyard suggests how the authoritarian and political aspects of the Church's role in the region became entangled with the spiritual aspects. Because of Jim's mother's Catholic faith, the threat that Jim would not be buried in the cemetery was emotionally distressing to her. Jim's depiction of his dad understanding his advocacy for local control is complicated by his depiction of his dad reassuring his mother that Jim was not against the Church. This complication challenges Jim's more casual response to the priest's threat.

Max Morin also referred to the Church's "usual tactics" and the strong Catholic faith of local people, though he framed his interpretation within a broader history of the Catholic Church in Rome and Europe. Like other community members, Max noted the difficulty the Church had in accepting their changing role in the community after nearly 130 years of control. He explained:

They threatened a few of our local residents, some of our local leaders with excommunication. You know, the old tactics that they use and early history of the Church in Rome or in Europe they excommunicated people or even put people to death, cause I know that kind of history but a lot of our local residents didn't know that kind. But, that's how they threatened some people, 'if you want to do that, we're going to excommunicate you from the Church.' And there was strong Catholic people in the community because that's how we were brought up and the Elders were really strong and they go to church every morning at 7 o'clock.⁷¹

Again, Max's observations relate to my earlier arguments about the complicated relationships between Catholic faith and the colonial power of the Church, though he observes that this is not simply an issue within Indigenous history but more broadly within the Church's history. It is also significant that he explains, "that's how we were brought up," when referencing the strong Catholic people within the community. In this way, Max sees himself as more aware of the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

Church's history, but does not entirely separate himself from the Catholic populace of Ile-a-la-Crosse as Catholicism is part of people's upbringing and daily practice.

The personal stories of individuals involved in the school takeover tend to complicate the simple dichotomy of pro-local control versus pro-Church. This is an issue that I will pick up in the following chapter, but it is worth noting here as it complicates Jim's depiction of Catholic Elders unwilling to criticize the Church or the notion that MSS organizing marked the first time individuals stood up against the Church. Rather, local Indigenous people have historically negotiated their relationship with the Catholic Church, and as I have demonstrated in earlier chapters a strong Catholic faith has not necessarily meant an unwillingness to critique the Church. Jim's contrasting pro-local control with pro-Church at some points during our interview were complicated by other stories that he shared about his family and life history. For example, he shared a story of his grandmother standing up to the priest over how he was treated at the residential school. Jim explained:

When I was younger it was the same, like my grandmother went to church every Sunday and she was a very strong lady. She, when I got shit for speaking Cree, the priest you know and the nun or the teacher got after me for that and my grandma, I told my grandma because they slapped the shit out of me so I told my grandma. I came home crying and told my grandma, and boy she took me and she went to see the priest and she said you are never to touch my grandchild again. And you leave him alone to talk his language. The priest backed right up. So that was a good thing my grandma was very strong a strong woman.⁷²

In this story Jim recognizes his grandmother's faith in going to church every Sunday and her strength in standing up to the priest. It challenges his earlier depiction of uncritical faithful old people and highlights the complicated relationship historically between community members and the Church. Catholic faith could at times mean local complacency, but at other times it meant resistance. Jim's varying stories of the Catholicism of Elders also illustrates a broader trend within the narratives I have heard about the local history of the Church where the relationship between Catholicism and Indigeneity is contextual, ambiguous, and negotiated.

The continuing significance of the Church, especially to older community members in the northwest, was missing in political material published in the 1970s, and only more recently became an issue that political leaders had to address. In a 2004 interview with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, Jim Sinclair explained:

⁷² Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

So many of our Elders, even at that time, were tied to the Church so close that even if the younger people said something, they would be chastised by the older people and so people like Durocher and Jonas Favel and some of these more militant people that grew out of the movement, had to get out and fight with their own community... to fight the Church in those days was a very, very difficult thing.⁷³

To Sinclair, it was because of the local support for the Church that leaders had to be militant and radical. In Ile-a-la-Crosse, this resulted in two years of conflict that ended with a split in the community. Other examples provided by Sinclair show how he, as a southerner, had difficulties speaking Dene the north, a language the local priests could speak fluently. Provincial Indigenous political leaders could be positioned as outsiders to the north, and priests as insiders. The difficulties the MSS encountered in going against the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse and other northern communities eventually resulted in the leadership recognizing that they needed a different approach for working with Catholic community members.

In that same 2004 interview, Sinclair and Jim Durocher noted that they later realized they needed the pope to gain the support of some of their own Elders. Sinclair explained:

And our big struggle, I think Durocher we never talked about this much, is our, is our struggle with the church of how we, we had to sit down and look at how do we get our Elders who believe so much in this Catholic church to support us like they wanted to in our movement, and to, and to actually give us the kind of support we needed without out trying to say what they, trying to take the church away from them. And that started our meetings with the pope. That's how we got to meet with the Pope and to get a letter finally from the pope, supporting our rights.⁷⁴

Though community ties to the Church were clearly central to these conflicts and how some local people understood the takeover, they were not something that the leadership talked about very often. In this way, the struggle of the MSS with the Church and more specifically with Catholic Elders who hesitated to support the movement has not been the focus of historical studies of Indigenous organising, nor is it a prominent part of local historical consciousness. It was only later in their political careers that Durocher and Sinclair recognized that they needed the support of the Catholic Church. In our interview, Jim Durocher explained that working with the pope was a way to bring Catholic Elders to the cause of Metis rights while still challenging the local Church establishment. Jim Durocher shared, "A lot of Aboriginal people went to the pope and

⁷³ Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte Interview, Métis Political Activist Interviews April 17, 2004, tape 1, transcript, Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://Desjarlais.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/06095.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

because the Pope has a lot of power, and if we can convince him to use that power properly, to our way of thinking instead of their old established way, then we could get places. Then, so, the Church at the local level lost a lot of power when the pope came over.”⁷⁵

A general theme in my interviews with community members was of missing perspectives in existing narratives and a more general sense that the details of the movement for local control are not widely understood. Tony Durocher began our conversation by talking about the school burning down in 1972, and using that story to illustrate what perspectives are shared and not shared. He more generally introduced his retelling as being about “when we had problems at the school.”⁷⁶ Tony thought that he had been the overseer the year that the school burned down, and framed his discussion around that event and the resulting need to build a new school. His recounting of the fire draws attention to his own knowledge and role in trying to save the school. Tony recognized the type of fire from when he worked in the arctic and knew that the school could not be entirely saved. He rushed to the Father’s house to get Brother Bertrand Guay to bring the Cat. Tony had the knowledge and expertise to know what had to be done, but did not have access to the resources. Brother Guay did not want to come with the Cat, so Tony returned to the burning school. When he saw Brother Guay coming with the Cat, Tony was able to convince him to use the Cat to break a hallway in half to stop the fire from burning the entire school. To Tony, “that’s how we saved half the school.”⁷⁷

The instructive part of Tony’s story was his explanation of how his involvement was not included in Archbishop Lavoie’s published account of the school burning down.⁷⁸ Tony explained:

And the funny thing happened there years later. The priest, he was the bishop by that time. He wrote about that fire. He wrote little stories about Ile-a-la-Crosse, but he wrote about that fire. And he said it was a good thing Brother Guay saved that school. But he didn’t know that I just about had to beg Brother Guay to come with the Cat. When you don’t know the story before the story, sometimes it doesn’t come out. It comes out but not in the way it started. So that’s how we saved half the school.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

⁷⁶ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*, pp. 61-62.

⁷⁹ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014. The quotation from Archbishop Lavoie’s book that Tony refers to is: “Though the cause is unknown to this day, arson was suspected. The other half of the building was saved by Bro. Bertrand Guay OMI, who drove a steel-treaded Caterpillar tractor through the connecting corridor to cut the building in two and stop the fire from spreading.” Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*, p. 62.

Even though the school burning down in 1972 has not been widely written about, there is a sense of exclusion in Tony's recounting, and a clear reminder for historians writing about related events to consider the "story before the story." Tony's analysis also demonstrates the significance of local community knowledge and the fact that Church officials have not always recognized community knowledge, providing a subtle correction and critique of the archbishop's interpretation. Tony's own relationship with the movement for local control is more moderate and ambiguous than someone like Jim Durocher. While Tony clearly supported Vital Morin, recognized the colonial and racist context that leaders were responding to and wanted a new school for the community, he was less sure about the DNS and MSS whom he saw as "hippies" and remains saddened by what he sees as the resulting decreased presence of the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁸⁰

Most of the individuals I interviewed recognized the events associated with the movement for local control as pivotal in the history of Ile-a-la-Crosse and more broadly; however, several noted that it is not a story that is being passed on to younger generations in the community. When I interviewed Métis Nation of Canada President Clément Chartier, he assumed that the takeover would be more broadly discussed within Ile-a-la-Crosse, stating: "and in the meantime in Ile-a-la-Crosse, it became more central, or more of a focal point and that's where the big issue, the clash came between the Church and the Metis activists in terms of the school, and you probably have lots on that."⁸¹ In contrast, several people I interviewed noted that many people in Ile-a-la-Crosse do not know the history of the takeover, and particularly the struggles and conflict within the community that were a part of that movement. For example, Jim Durocher explained:

But even today, you know a lot of people don't know the history of that—the struggles that happened there in that school. A lot of people. You know, there was a lot of split amongst the community, even amongst families. It wasn't right it wasn't the Aboriginal way. You realize, if there's a problem in the community we like to sit down and talk about it, instead of doing it the *Moniyaw* way I call it which is sometimes conflict would work better if it was done by the community.⁸²

As long as the narrative is one of Metis activists standing up against the colonial Church, it fits within the historical consciousness of certain individuals and their understandings of Indigeneity. The aspects of the struggle that involved conflict within the community and families does not fit with Jim's understanding of the "Aboriginal way," suggesting why aspects of the movement are

⁸⁰ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

⁸¹ Clément Chartier, 14 January 2014.

⁸² Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

not being passed on, and illustrating how some individuals struggle to reconcile the realities of local Catholicism within their own narratives of Indigenous rights and decolonization and sense of Indigeneity as oppositional to Catholicism.

The notion that the details of the movement for local control, and in particular the conflict are not being passed on as parts of local historical consciousness is reinforced by comments made by three other community members, Duane Favel, his mother Marie Favel, and Tony Durocher. Unlike Jim Durocher, these individuals were not political organizers at the time, and several have noted the significance of the Catholic faith in either their personal histories or in the history of the community. When I was discussing the take over of the school with Duane Favel he commented, “But now if you ask any youth in the community, they probably wouldn’t have any recollection or wouldn’t have that history.”⁸³ In response to my question “so it’s not a story you’re telling your kids?” Duane responded:

No, no, no, but I think it’s good to communicate why we’re a community based school division, and I think the youth should know it was a real struggle to get to that point, and that we should be, I guess we should be happy that people took up that fight. And I think education in Ile-a-la-Crosse is strong ...That’s something I don’t think about too often any more, but it’s certainly nice to be able to reflect on that again.⁸⁴

Duane’s parents, Jim and Marie Favel, ended up on opposite sides of the struggle for local control, making the conflict personal for Duane who was in elementary school at the time. In his reflections about sharing the story with his own kids he emphasizes that he has not, but also recognizes the significance of both the struggle and the uniqueness of Ile-a-la-Crosse as a separate school division. Aspects of his narrative, like emphasizing the strength of education in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the ultimate success of the movement are apparent in other interviews.⁸⁵ Duane’s comment that the takeover is not something that he thinks about very often indicates that not only is this an event that he has not shared with his children, but it is one that is not at the forefront of his own historical consciousness.

Similarly Marie Favel noted that the takeover was something that she did “not hear people talk about anymore” outside of spaces with outsiders, like conferences where the autonomy of the

⁸³ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ For example, Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014; Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012; Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

local school board was explained.⁸⁶ To Tony Durocher as those involved got older and either forgot about the conflict or forgave others, he explained “most of us I think let it slide, uh, the young people, I don’t know if they follow what happened, but that’s what happened.”⁸⁷ As the conflict itself eased, so to did public discussion. In this way, the events associated with the school take over differ from the events discussed in other chapters. While stories of Willow Heart and Father Moraud have shifted within local historical consciousness, the school-take over, an event that is almost always recognized as important, is not a story that community members share or regularly think about.

Like the more general hesitancy to discuss the conflict associated with local control, individuals whose stories do not align with the narrative of Metis activists standing up against the Church, seem not to have developed their own personal narratives of events—suggesting that they have not shared their stories. The varying historical consciousness about the takeover is shaped by the intersections of gender, family, economics, sexuality, age, mobility, faith, and politics. In addition to references by a range of individuals in the community about the story of the takeover not being passed on to younger generations, other individuals with whom I spoke did not seem to have developed clear narratives of this event and their retellings were filled with uncertainty and changes of topic. There was more ambiguity within these accounts that identified a need for local control to counter the colonial realities of the region, but even these accounts were critical of some of the methods by individuals that were seen as disrespectful to the priests. Uncertainty and ambiguity were most apparent in my conversations with Elders Ovide and Irene Desjarlais, whom I formally interviewed twice for this project. I worked with Ovide before on a community-mapping project. During our first formal interview, Ovide and Irene seemed hesitant to discuss the takeover of the school. Irene indicated that the takeover marked a shift from her parents’ generation that would never say anything against the priests. After a brief discussion about the takeover during our initial meeting, the topic changed. We had a second interview in the home of Ovide and Irene’s daughter, Barb Flett, in October of 2014. During that conversation we were able to go more in depth about the school, though Ovide and Irene’s preference seemed to be discussing other topics. Barb also had some memories of the takeover that she was more eager to share.

⁸⁶ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013.

⁸⁷ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

Memories of the event were uncertain, and some points had to be discussed to clarify what had happened, which I interpret as an indicator that the event was not commonly discussed in the Desjarlais family, and possibly that my framing of events in terms of a school takeover and movement for local control did not fit with their historical consciousness. Similarly, Ovide and Irene did not volunteer details about their personal involvement with the takeover, and based on our initial conversation I did not think that the couple was directly involved. I had learned from my archival research after our initial interview that Irene served on the temporary education committee after the vote for local control. In response to my question about being involved after the community took over the school, Irene replied:

Yeah I was on there. They called it an ad hoc committee. We went to see the Minister and the Minister said ‘well why don’t you move why don’t you move to canoe river, there’s those fields there?’ And I said, ‘oh no we’re not going to move, there’s already a big split in town, why would we want to make it any more because there would have been a war from both sides of the river.’ So we didn’t. We went to ask for a school. That was the time *the school burned*, that was why we went over there.⁸⁸

Irene brought up the issue of conflict within the community by explaining that the province wanted to move the community and the new school onto the main highway, though it is clear that there was already a conflict in the community, evident in her concern that the conflict could erupt into a war.

Rather than focusing on the split, Irene focused on the school burning down as the catalyst in the struggle for local control and as the key event in her retelling. She explained, “Somebody had burned the school, or I shouldn’t say that. I don’t know who, why it burned.”⁸⁹ Irene hesitated to discuss the reason why the school burned down, or to negatively speculate about other members of the community.

Ovide and Irene were less direct than others who I interviewed in their discussions of the Church’s power within the community and the context of colonialism that inspired the movement for local control. In addition to seeming to avoid discussing the conflict or sharing details about the split in the community, it is possible that they were uncomfortable commenting directly on their experiences of colonialism and racism to a white woman. The following is an example of how the role of the Church and colonialism was brought into our conversation:

⁸⁸ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Irene: But they were already saying that people were fighting the Church, and it was horrible stories going around.

Barb: But the Church did get involved, at that time?

Irene: Yeah, because they were all, they ran everything then. They ran the school.⁹⁰

This theme was picked up again later in our conversation, when Ovide and Irene shared that local people were on the school board prior to the takeover but did not really have a say:

Ovide: But it's well, it was just like a rubber stamp you couldn't, it was useless

Irene: [overlapping] It was run, you swallowed whatever they give you, you have no say.

Ovide: [overlapping] Yeah.⁹¹

This conversation is one of the clearest examples of Ovide and Irene describing the power of the Church and the exclusion of local Indigenous people from decision-making. The exchange also suggests that our interview was one of the first times that Ovide, Irene, and Barb had discussed these events. There were also generational differences in how the history was understood, even though Barb was a student at the time of the takeover.

Different generational understandings and memories of the takeover were apparent in other parts of our conversation, as was the sense that this was not an event that Ovide and Irene regularly shared stories about. Barb seemed more interested in discussing the takeover than her parents, and brought up her memories of the mission school and the sit-in by those in favour of local control resulting in some debate and uncertainty over what the sit-in was about. The sit-in occurred after local control was achieved when control of the school board had shifted back to those in support of the mission. They discussed:

Barb: But it must have been a Catholic school, and then so they had a sit-in and they, I don't know how long it lasted the sit in. how many...

Irene: Not very long.

Barb: Three days, four days? Everybody was in the school, like a lot of people were in the school.

Irene: At the gym

Barb: I slept there and stayed there. and then...

Irene: We never stayed there eh? We never went to the sit-in.

Barb: I was there so somebody must have been there.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Irene: You probably went to check it out.

Barb: [overlapping] No I remember staying there.⁹²

Similar conversations occurred during our interview about the role of the MSS, and more focused conversations were typically followed by a shift in topic. The sit-in was one of the first stories related to the movement for local control that I learned in Ile-a-la-Crosse, as part of the more general narrative of Metis activists taking control of the school from the Church. This contrasts with the timeline I provided at the start of this chapter where the sit-in was part of the community split as a result of the establishment of a local school board. The conversation between Irene and Barb suggests different views towards the sit-in and the family's participation in it, as well as the possibility of generational differences. Irene was on the temporary education committee, and understood the need for local control, but she did not recall participating in more radical public demonstrations like the sit-in. In contrast, her daughter remembered the sit-in as a key event in the movement. Conflicting memories of the sit-in suggest differing understandings of the movement for local control and how the sit-in related to that process. Furthermore, their different recountings draw attention to the more ambiguous relationship between individuals like Irene, decolonization, and the Church.

While conducting my dissertation research, I have spent more time with Elder Eliza Aubichon than any of the other community members with whom I worked. Some of this time was during more formal interviews, but the majority has been informal conversations over tea in Ile-a-la-Crosse, on car trips, at Lac Ste Anne, or at my home in Saskatoon. From these conversations I have started to get a sense of Eliza's life story. She has shared with me some of her violent experiences at the residential school before the takeover by the community. She discussed the challenges of an arranged marriage and her early-married life, illnesses, and providing for her family after the death of her husband, including her current efforts to care for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She participates in sweats once a week, but she is also called upon to pray and say the rosary for people who are ill and dying. She has often described herself as a strong-woman.⁹³

During one of our formal interviews I tried to ask Eliza about the takeover of the school during the 1970s. The flow of our conversation during this interview became stilted, with me

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Eliza Aubichon, 16 October 2012; Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 7 August 2013; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

trying to explain what I was asking several times. She eventually responded “My husband was in the hospital for three months in Saskatoon he had leukemia...after I think they put me as a teacher in the school, they said we were qualified to teach ... I had my hands full with my kids.”⁹⁴ At another point in our conversation Eliza clarified, “And I had to work and support my kids because I lost my husband in ‘71, he had leukemia. So I had to work.”⁹⁵ For this self-described strong-woman, the takeover of the school was not a significant event in her life. She was dealing with her husband’s illness, his passing, and was steadily looking after her family.

Following the takeover, Eliza spent some time teaching handicrafts in the school for money, work directly associated with the movement for local control, but not in Eliza’s retelling. In other conversations she has spoken more extensively about other efforts to support her family, such as bootlegging. This raises questions about how events (even those identified by communities as significant) fit within various life histories, as well as the various intersections of gender, economics, work, and marital status. Eliza later echoed a sense of exclusion and hesitancy to discuss community conflict. When I asked about the conflict in the town she suggested that certain individuals wanted to get the priest out of town. She indicated they had private meetings about it but that she was not present for those meetings. Again this may relate to a hesitancy to bring up past conflicts, especially to an outsider who did not grow with the community. My conversations with Eliza have highlighted how insignificant the takeover could be for women who were focused on providing for their families and were excluded from meetings. A certain amount of economic security was needed to be a radical organizer or even to serve on committees.

I first met Marie Favel in 2006, when I interviewed her about the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Marie was born in Beauval and raised by her Catholic grandparents. She married Jim Favel when she was 18 and moved to Ile-a-la-Crosse. In our first interview, which took place in a sweat lodge at her home, she emphasised the strength of her own faith, noting that she had once thought about becoming a nun.⁹⁶ In explaining the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Marie said, “When you are a woman, you want to take your problems to a woman.”⁹⁷ In 2013 I had a chance to interview Marie about her experiences during the school takeover. She has

⁹⁴ Eliza Aubichon, 16 October 2012.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Marie Favel, Interview with Jody Crew, MacKinley Darlington, and Amanda Fehr, Near Ile-a-la-Crosse, 21 June 2006.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

consistently played a leadership role in the community, in recent years working in the school as an Elder and working closely with young women, in fact our interview took place in Rossignol elementary school—the school built as a result of the community takeover. While her husband Jim was involved with the MSS, Marie continued to support the Church. She told me that the takeover was a difficult time in her personal history and a challenging time for her marriage.

In Marie's recounting of the takeover she emphasised the personal and marital struggle, the emotional hardship, but also that in the end it brought the community together. She explained, "it was a struggle, a lot of misunderstandings about what the Metis Nation was trying to do to help... a lot of healing had to take place."⁹⁸ The change that was taking place was hard--emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally.⁹⁹ In her narrative she framed her husband as a politician and herself as a churchgoer, even though today they attend church and sweats together, and she has often played a leadership role in the community. Marie seemed more hesitant to discuss the takeover of the school than other aspects of the community and her life histories. For a woman such as Marie, the takeover was a challenging moment in her personal life and marriage, a topic that she shared with me, but not as openly as other aspects of the community history. Marie's continued support of the Church cannot be reduced to just gender. Some of the male Elders I spoke with also continued attending church throughout the conflict and had a similar narrative of a period of conflict and struggle followed by community reconciliation. This illustrates that family differences (and at times related economic differences), generational differences, and individual life experiences factored into how individuals experienced and interpreted the movement for local control and negotiated their community, Catholic faith, and the Church.

The split in Ile-a-la-Crosse cut across kinship and friendship lines. While there are apparent differences between radical and more moderate individuals who were in favour of local control, it is worth noting that prior to the conflict these were not separate groups. During our discussion of the takeover and the sit-in at the school Barb Flett posited that people were radical

⁹⁸ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013. Archbishop Lavoie wrote about the impact of the conflict on Marie and Jim Favel's marriage, using their personal story to illustrate the depth of the conflict within the community and families. "He writes: "While Jim and his brother Jonas were very political Marie's involvement was with the Church. These events pulled Jim into a political maelstrom that placed pressure on their family, their faith, and their marital relationship. The political forces at play actually pitted Jim against the Church to which both he and Marie belonged. While Marie continued to attend church, Jim would be heavily involved in meetings and travels that sought to change the role that the Church was playing in the north."⁹⁸ Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*, p. 65-66.

⁹⁹ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013.

and sometimes used rough tactics because they did not know how to communicate. In response, her mother Irene said “yeah, but they got so tired. They got so tired of trying to get something going and nobody would listen to them and they’re always told what to do. I think that’s it. You have to know the stories from both sides, and I did hear stories from both sides, cause I used to be friends with the radicals.”¹⁰⁰ Irene supported local control and even served on the temporary education committee, but did not identify with the radicals. Her statement suggests the range of individuals who supported local control, as well as the fact that individuals who did not see themselves as radical, or were critical of the rougher tactics employed by some, could still be sympathetic. I followed up by clarifying if Irene was ‘just friends’ with radicals or if she considered herself a radical. Her response included one of her stronger critiques of the mission during the conflict, though she reiterated that she was not a radical. She clarified:

Just friends because we were all friends before this whole thing started and there was no split at the time so you can pick and choose your friends. But, after that, I don’t know. (Pause) Because you know the mission, the priest and a few nuns they would go to the, to the farm and they would go and meet there. Everybody knew it. I don’t know what the hell they were doing that for like, you would be against the whole town.¹⁰¹

The notion of people being friends before suggests that the split did not simply reflect existing divisions within the community. In fact, Ovide’s sister Leonie was married to Jim Durocher, making Jim and Irene siblings-in-law.

A recurring theme in the recountings was that those opposed to local control did not understand what it was, and that once they came to understand they were supportive. Framing the conflict as a misunderstanding was a more positive way for individuals to discuss the split in their community, and at times was an opportunity to share their own more moderate or ambiguous experiences with the movement and continuing Catholic faith. Rather than an unresolvable split, the fight was because individuals did not understand the changes taking place. For example, Irene Desjarlais shared, “After they understood, my God it took a lot of fighting for them to understand. That’s all it was, you know, you fight something that you don’t understand. You don’t want any change. And you gotta change sometimes.”¹⁰² In another part of the conversation Irene reiterated her point around not understanding, suggesting that once community members were “fully awake” they participated in the school board and supported

¹⁰⁰ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

local control. Marie Favel also framed part of her recounting around the idea that growth and awakening was needed for community members to understand and support the changes taking place.¹⁰³ As in other parts of our interview it is not entirely clear who was included in the word “they.” It could be that “they” includes those community members who did not support local control, but Irene does not provide names of individuals. This ambiguity, and her own position of supporting local control without being a radical, complicates the notion that there were simply individuals for and individuals against the movement.

Tony Durocher reflected on not understanding aspects of the movement for local control, but it appeared to be more the methods of the DNS that he did not understand. Tony shared, “I think they were hippies myself, a different kind of thinking anyway. Maybe they were ahead of us, I don’t know.”¹⁰⁴ Like others, Tony framed the movement of the takeover as something fundamentally positive but that not all community members understood. Unlike Irene, he seems to include himself more explicitly in the group that did not quite understand, explaining, “some of us didn’t quite understand, didn’t quite agree with what was going on. But after thinking about it, it’s better to have your own control instead of somebody in Prince Albert telling you what to do.”¹⁰⁵ Tony’s phrasing “some of us” indicates that he is included in this group, suggesting a more moderate involvement in supporting local control, while not agreeing with some of the methods and organizations like the DNS and the MSS that were involved. At other points in our conversation Tony shared about his continuing Catholic faith and sadness about the declining role of the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse after the conflict in the seventies, a theme that I will pick up in the next chapter.

Humour was another way that community members discussed the realities of colonialism as well as the split within the community. For example Ovide and Irene shared with me the story of teachers criticizing students for eating bannock, but unlike Max, they mobilized humour in their recounting. When combined with other points that they made during our interview the story illustrates the judgment of outside authorities, like teachers, towards community members and contextualizes the movement for local control. Like in other chapters, humour adds local agency

¹⁰³ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

to recountings of colonialism and is potentially a more comfortable way of communicating a history of colonialism and racism with myself as a white-settler woman.¹⁰⁶ For example:

Irene: The teachers were saying something to the people they said something to the kids about what you ate and what you...

Ovide: Oh yeah, that was yeah, that before the, that school was still up that time. They wrote in the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* that we, we live on tea and bannock yeah. Tea, bannock and lard.

Irene: That's a good combination

Ovide: Make's a halfbreed smile, yeah [laughing].

Irene: Yeah, So they got kind of mad and they got together with the teachers and they apologized

Ovide: Anyway those were the good old days.¹⁰⁷

Here, the use of humour and agency in claiming tea, bannock, and lard as a good combination downplays the conflict, when compared to other recountings of this event such as that shared by Max Morin earlier in this chapter. This tendency to downplay conflict was further emphasized by Ovide's effort to bring the discussion back to the "good old days."

Similarly, Irene employed humour when sharing a story about one of her aunties who she describes as "still fighting," illustrating the continuing conflict within the community and the belief held by some community members that the Church has been pushed out of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Her auntie refers to Snob Hill, the area of Ile-a-la-Crosse that is on the opposite side of the village from the mission, as the "Devil's side."¹⁰⁸ Irene explained:

You know what my auntie still says, she lives way on the other side of town there, She says when she wants to say something about that. Snob Hill, she would say, 'the devils, on the Devil's side.' She said we even took the hospital away from them. She said. Like they're still fighting. When they built the hospital over here they took down the other one over there at the mission grounds they think they're still fighting them that they brought the hospital over [laughing] to the Devil's side [chuckling]. I found that funny but I didn't say anything to her. She's always right my aunt.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ For discussions of Indigenous humour and trauma, and humour and as a form of resistance see: Kristina Fagan, "Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo: Storytelling, Humour, and Trauma in the Fiction of Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson. *Studies in Canadian Literature* 34.1 (2009); Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007).

¹⁰⁷ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014.

¹⁰⁸ See Katya MacDonald, "Community and Aboriginality in an Aboriginal Community: Relating to Histories in and of Ile-a-la-Crosse," *Saskatchewan History* 61:2 (2009).

¹⁰⁹ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014.

Even though this quotation focuses on the separation from the hospital from the mission rather than the school, the two events were linked in the minds of others I have interviewed as well as Church officials at the time.¹¹⁰ This was also one of the only instances when a more direct comment was made about continuing tensions within the community. Like the discussion shared above, the topic changed after Irene finished the story to a more nostalgic discussion of cleaning floors and a time when people were not bored.

Everyone I interviewed about the movement for local control framed their narratives of the conflict as one that fundamentally resulted in a positive outcome for the community. Those who identified as radicals or political leaders as well as those with more moderate, ambiguous, or openly Church supporting positions in the conflict noted the ultimate success and benefit of the movement. Jim Durocher, as an organizer and self-described radical at the time, seemed more willing to talk about the continuing tension within the community, but still concluded with the notion that everything turned out okay. Jim explained:

It took a while, but even today, you still feel that tension from the older ones eh. You know they'll talk about 'oh, geez, remember the time we took over the school?' and somebody will say, 'yeah you guys did and left the Church out,' and stuff. The Elders hey, a lot of the Elders we respect the Elders. I have a great deal of respect for the Elders, but they were in a different world. They went with the status quo, you know the mission controlled them for years and years and years, and it's hard to break out from that and I can understand that. I know that. Later on looking at things, it was tough for them. But all in all it turned out okay. And now it's getting graduates every year now.¹¹¹

As in other parts of Jim's recounting, the Church-supporting Elders were in a different world. There is tension, but not ambiguity. The dichotomy that Jim presents of the Catholic world of Elders controlled by the mission versus those who wanted local control was complicated by other parts of Jim's recounting, such as the story of his grandmother shared above as well as his wife Leonie's continuing Catholic faith, discussed in the next chapter.

Similarly, Tony Durocher recognized a continuing friction as well as the overall benefit deriving from the movement, even though Tony's role in the movement and with the Church differed from Jim Durocher. Tony explained, "to this day there's still a little bit of friction...But the local school board is good because we got Doug Cardinal to design the school and we had a say in that. What kind of school we wanted and today now we have the local principal at the high

¹¹⁰ Max Morin, 15 July 2014; "Bishop Sutton Correspondence," Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

¹¹¹ Jim Durocher, 25 September 2012.

school and at the other school.”¹¹² By recognizing the tension but ultimately emphasizing that things have worked out, both Jim and Tony shift their narratives of the takeover from one of local conflict with varying ways of negotiating Catholicism, to the ultimate success of the local school board and local graduates. Marie Favel also noted the benefits of the new school and increased local participation, explaining that since then Christmas concerts have been the highlight of the year.¹¹³ Here, the positive effects of the movement for local control relate to the continued Catholic aspects of the locally run Rossignol School, indicating once again the complex ways that Catholicism continues to be meaningful amidst processes of decolonization.¹¹⁴

The fact that Ile-a-la-Crosse was predominantly a non-status Metis community during the early 1970s factored into how the movement for local control over education occurred. English River as a First Nation also gained control over their school during the 1970s, but this was part of a broader federal process rather than a local movement, and it involved working with the Church rather than a conflict with the mission. Elder Ovide Wolverine was involved in the school during the 1970s, and explained, “We built the school here, St. Louis school... We only started with a little building with two nuns in there to begin with.”¹¹⁵ Both Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak gained community schools during the 1970s that resulted in the majority of people from around the lake and rivers moving to town, but the processes by which each community established local control over education differed.

When I first met with the Chief and Council of English River First Nation about my doctoral project, it was suggested that through resource management Patuanak has been able to achieve more local control and independence. Yet, agreements with mining companies remain controversial within the community¹¹⁶ and arguably cannot completely take effect while the community remains under the Indian Act. As Elder Frank McIntyre explained, as long as English

¹¹² Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

¹¹³ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013.

¹¹⁴ Max Morin noted the continuing significance of colonial mindsets in Ile-a-la-Crosse, explaining: “And we still have that colonial feeling or I don’t know how to describe it. When colonialism was set up here, all of a sudden we were no good, these guys were good. The white people were good people and we were no good. So if you set up a gas station in town and I set up beside you most people would go buy off you and not me.” Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

¹¹⁵ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014. For more information about Ovide, see Appendix A.

¹¹⁶ See for example, Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014. For information about Bernie Eaglechild, see Appendix A.

River remains under the Indian Act, they will never have local control.¹¹⁷ It was more difficult to ask those I interviewed in English River about the concept of local control than to ask individuals in Ile-a-la-Crosse. When I asked Ovide Wolverine about English River gaining more local control he referred to the First Nation's companies and economic ventures, rather than the school. He explained, "Well, we're fighting for that in a lot of ways. In many things we do. We have our own things. Like we have our own companies, Tron Power and the store, and a few anyway. So, we try to keep the young guys all occupied with jobs. But I'm not sure now what's happening, I kind of slowed down in many ways too."¹¹⁸

In his memoirs Chief Ralph Paul shares a story and a prophecy about Dene people taking control of their own lives. He describes paddling with his grandparents and learning that the eagles were hiding. Chief Paul writes:

They [the eagles] would keep away from the Dene because the Dene were a subjugated people and the Eagle would only return only when the Dene revived. This is now happening. The Dene are now taking control of their lives and making the government aware that the Dene are not going to be their guardians any longer. In other words, the Dene are taking control of their lives and the eagles are returning. They are now eagles in evidence all over that area that is Patuanak.¹¹⁹

Because of the legacy of differing status resulting from families taking treaty or scrip, English River is only recently taking over its own affairs.

This chapter has considered a range of accounts about the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse. These recountings point to the significance of colonialism and racism in the northwest as a motivation for change, and how those with experiences outside of the region, such as veterans, became local leaders who were able to recognize that something was not working in Ile-a-la-Crosse. There is a tendency, at least publicly, to focus on the success of the movement and to position the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse as a leading community in the region. In contrast, people hesitate to publicly discuss the difficulties that were part of this movement and the resulting split that occurred within the community as the MSS and the mission viewed local control and pro-Church as oppositional. The reality was that many individuals' relationships with local control and the Church were more complicated. Pro-local control did not mean anti-Church for many local leaders, differentiating them from Sinclair and Dr. Adams. It was a challenge for the Metis Society to adapt their goals of decolonization with the Catholic reality of

¹¹⁷ McIntyre Frank, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 20 August 2013.

¹¹⁸ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

¹¹⁹ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 125.

Indigenous communities in the north. While community members recognized the movement for local control as a significant event, it is not one that they are passing down to future generations, apparent in both explicit statements of being a story that is not widely shared and in how the narratives themselves were crafted. Those I worked with attempted to make sense of the conflict, and tended to focus on the split as a misunderstanding, emphasizing that everything worked out in the end.

Telling the story of the school takeover in Ile-a-la-Crosse helps to further understandings of a specific local history and broader movements towards decolonization in Canada. Beyond this, these stories, and the people who tell them, begin to complicate how we understand the process of decolonization as one that locally involved conflicts as individuals continued to negotiate Indigeneity and Catholicism. The public narrative of the takeover is one that positions Indigeneity and Catholicism as oppositional. I have found that this public narrative is challenged by recountings that illustrate more complex understandings of the local conflict, the MSS, the Church, and individuals' Catholic faith within local historical consciousness. This chapter has primarily focused on Ile-a-la-Crosse. In English River, moving towards local control as a treaty First Nation under the Indian Act would involve different considerations. The next chapter takes a more focused look at the effect of the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse on individual faith and the relationship between the community and the Church. This discussion of the faith aspects of the movement for local control is used as a launching point for a broader discussion of Catholicism and decolonization in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak since the 1970s, paying specific attention to the relationships between Catholicism and the return of sweat lodges and the continuing significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the region.

Chapter Seven

“Yeah, no he [Vital Morin] wasn’t anti, they said stuff about him and at one point I think he was threatened to get excommunicated, but the thing that hurt him most I think was eventually the priests started leaving the community.”¹

-Max Morin

Happy and proud stories of achieving local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse sit alongside stories of sadness regarding the declining role of the Catholic Church in the region. Despite Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak no longer having permanent resident priests, Catholicism continues to be negotiated as a significant aspect of individual and community identities. The Virgin Mary is apparent in the northwest in shrines with statues of the Blessed Mother built to protect travellers, and since 2002 she has appeared in apparitions and visions to select residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse and other northern communities. There is a deeper history of making intercessory prayers to the Virgin Mary and of going on pilgrimages to Duck Lake, Lac Ste. Anne, and further afield. The Church itself has also changed considerably since the 1960s and 1970s as the reforms of Vatican II have been implemented in the provincial north. This, combined with a declining clergy, has opened the door to a lay clergy as well as efforts increasingly supported by the Church hierarchy to revitalize Indigenous spirituality such as sweat lodges. The Virgin Mary and Church support in revitalizing Indigenous spirituality are not typically themes in the scholarship associated with considering efforts at decolonizing during the second half of the twentieth century.² Through this lens; however, I am able to complicate the binaries observed in the previous chapter of radicals and Catholics to consider the variety of ways that community members negotiate decolonization and their Catholic faith.

The movement for local control marked a change in a Catholic community. It also marked continuity, as it was not the first time local people critiqued the Church hierarchy. The Church and Catholic faith also continued to be significant aspects of local life, religiously, socially, and politically. As Ile-a-la-Crosse mayor Duane Favel explained:

The Roman Catholic faith has always been really strong in the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Especially when I was younger, the Church played a significant role in the community in terms of providing spiritual guidance and direction of the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Going to mass was a big part of our lives when we

¹ Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014.

² For example Chantal Fiola positions Christianity in opposition to Anishinabe Spirituality in *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

were younger... I guess I have this perspective because I didn't attend any residential schools and don't have that history behind us, that people in charge at the time. The priests, when I grew up [during the 1960s and 1970s], this played a significant role, they were well liked, well appreciated, and I think did a good job in the role that they played in the community.³

This chapter considers how the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse affected community members' faith and their relationships with the Church, before considering how people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak continue to negotiate the colonial legacy of the Church with a continuing Catholic faith amongst efforts to heal and honour family traditions. Following a discussion of the faith aspects of the takeover, I discuss the significance of Catholicism in revitalizing the sweat lodge in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, before turning to the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in shrines, appearances, and pilgrimages.

The 1970s was a time of change more generally for the Church in northern Saskatchewan, though it should be noted that change could be sporadic and was often dependent on the training and perspectives of individual priests. Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie notes the arrival of the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon movements in the north during the 1970s, which were significant for many individuals and families, as well as more visible practices of Indigenous spirituality⁴ such as sweat lodges. The 1970s brought changes to the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse with Vatican II, though some changes would take longer to be integrated. As archbishop Sylvain explains:

The theology of Vatican II was percolating within the Church and beginning to have an impact on its leaders. Dialogue, enculturation, respect for First Nations spirituality, affirmation of culture and greater local autonomy were key elements of that renewed theology. These new concepts were timely and much needed at this critical historical moment in Ile-a-la-Crosse.”⁵

The archbishop goes on to note that, ironically, the priests in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1970 had created one of the first parish pastoral councils in the province in response to Vatican II, but the effort to include local people in parish decision-making came too late.⁶ While I agree with the archbishop's assessment, my work suggests that the movement for greater local autonomy in Ile-

³ Duane remembers being in grade four or five during the takeover of the school. His memories of the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse during his childhood overlap with the takeover. Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

⁴ I use the term Indigenous spirituality to include Dene, Cree, and Metis spiritual practices. Community members typically referred to Indigenous spirituality, Aboriginal spirituality, or Indian spirituality.

⁵ Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie, *Drumming from Within: Tales of Hope and Faith from Canada's North* (Novalis, 2009), p. 66.

⁶ Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*.

a-la-Crosse and respect for local First Nations' spirituality were processes rife with conflict between the community and various priests and most significantly within the community itself reflecting the varying local understandings of what it meant to be Catholic.

Because the 1970s was a time of change within the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II, the Church and to the attitudes of Church officials that I reference throughout this section have in some ways shifted from the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church of my earlier chapters. However, there is always an issue of difference between the official stance of the Catholic Church after Vatican II and the practice of local priests in remote missions such as Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak that could be inconsistent and varying depending on the particular priest. Young scholastic brothers such as Sylvain Lavoie and priests arriving in the north during the 1970s often brought different outlooks than older priests in the region who did not always incorporate new Church Doctrine. Beyond this, changing the role of the Church in the region was difficult for local priests and community members. While I recognize the significance of changes to the Catholic Church resulting from the second Vatican Council, the focus of this section is on local Indigenous understandings of these changes that tend to privilege local agency in taking over the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the work of community members.

Generally since the 1970s individuals I spoke with have observed significant changes in the Church, their own relationships with Church officials, as well as their personal faith. Elder Dorothy Dubrule contrasted her mother Georgina Morin's experience with the Church with her own. Dorothy has worked for many years as a lay minister in the community, and is someone whom I have interviewed several times since 2006. Her observations of her mother's approach to prayer and acceptance situate earlier discussions of Elders who did not want to overtly criticize the priests. Dorothy explained:

It's changed and for the better I'm thinking, personally. I don't have much to draw from, I used to speak with my mother, but she didn't really have much to say, she would just say that you know 'yeah we keep praying, we keep accepting the things that come our way,' because that's how it was for them, you know, you accept it. It happened, it happens, you accept it."⁷

It is not that earlier generations were unaware of problems, but that some believed in the power of prayer as a catalyst for change and as a tool for strengthening resolve and acceptance. In this way, the action of the takeover marks it as a significant moment of change in local relations with

⁷ Dorothy Dubrule, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 October 2014.

the Church that has affected how individuals belonging to Dorothy's generation understand their faith.

Irene Desjarlais' recounting of what the Catholic faith meant to her parents and grandparents moved beyond a faith in Catholic teachings and the Eucharist to not speaking against the priests. In one of our earlier meetings, Irene shared a story to illustrate her grandparents' strong Catholic faith. She shared how her family had travelled to Ile-a-la-Crosse for a feast day where she attended church with her grandma and received communion. Walking back to their tents near the grotto, Irene spat on the ground. Her spit landed where cows had been walking, and her grandmother picked up the spit and put it near a fence post, explaining to Irene that you were not supposed to let Jesus touch the ground or be in a place that could be walked on. After establishing the depth of her grandmother's faith, Irene commented on the takeover of the school explaining:

It [Catholic faith] was really something for them. You can never speak against priests. My dad was so set on anyone saying anything against priests because they left their homes to come and teach us about Jesus. Yeah. So I don't [hear] anyone ever say anything against them until that school issue came out, and they said they were fighting and they were saying things against the priest. I never heard anything but that's what they said.⁸

Irene understands her parents' and grandparents' faith and respect for the priests' sacrifice as a reason for never speaking against the priests. This is an issue that I have explored in earlier chapters, and that I have found co-exists with a history of Elders and community members at times challenging the priests while retaining their faith.⁹

In some way's Irene's observation of her parents fits with Jim Durocher's assessment of Elders as uncritical Church supporters because of their faith and acceptance of the status quo, and with Bernie Eaglechild's critiques of hardcore Catholics.¹⁰ However, Irene suggests the reason her father did not speak about priests was not because they were godly, but rather because he recognized their sacrifice and had faith in the veracity of their teachings. Irene, like Jim Durocher, also notes the significant shift that took place in the community around the school issue in terms of people publicly going against the Church. As I have noted earlier and will reiterate again here, many who supported local control, including Irene herself, were not anti-Church. There remains a perception locally that this event marked a changing relationship

⁸ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 October 2012.

⁹ See for example, chapter two and chapter four.

¹⁰ See chapter two.

between the community and the Church, so while the community continues to identify as Catholic it is a different type of Catholic community than it was prior to the split in that the community has now assumed a position of authority within and outside the Church.

Irene's father Napoleon, or Nap, Johnson was interviewed several times during his life. I never met Nap, but Irene and Ovide shared stories about him, including his work for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and as a special constable and for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Nap was interviewed by the Department of Northern Saskatchewan (DNS) in 1975, around the peak of the conflict regarding the school issue in Ile-a-la-Crosse. He did not reflect on the more recent school takeover, but discussed earlier conflicts with the Church over education complicating his daughter's understanding of his stance on the Church. Nap was born in 1915 and grew up at Sucker Point (about five miles from Ile-a-la-Crosse). He explained that he considered himself a treaty Indian, but resented the government whom he regarded as not recognizing his status because of his fair coloring. During the interview he shared two stories about earlier local conflicts over education, suggesting a broader history of the movement for local control in the 1970s that is missing in current local historical consciousness and complicating interpretations of earlier generations as uncritical churchgoers.

In one of his stories, Nap described Father Remy responding to local criticism about education:

So, I went to this meeting and I sit behind this Member of Parliament, blood brothers, Jules Marion. And when Father Ramey stood up there to speak, he said, 'some people didn't like the kids going to school here because they couldn't learn fast enough.' The reason for this, he said, 'We couldn't get no money from the government to hire good teachers. We had to get nuns to teach. For years we've been here, we had to go on our own. Bumming money, you know, and keep just go on. We try to learn their kids, but someday maybe we can get some money from the government.' So, I think it's about 2 years ago since they got a little bit monies and then, right away, they had good school teachers here."¹¹

Marion died in 1941, providing more of a chronology to Nap's recounting. The critiques that Father Remy was responding to during the 1930s or early 1940s seem to parallel the concerns of the early 1970s, indicating that the issues at the school were not new, nor was the fact that local people vocalized their concerns. Nap's reference to increased funding over the past two years seems to refer to money from the province in 1973 for building a new school and a locally run

¹¹ "An Interview with Nap Johnson of Ile-a-la-Crosse," Interviewed by Michael Tymchak, October 1975, Transcript, DNS Academic Education Branch, Northern Saskatchewan Archives.

school board, though he does not directly speak about the more recent move for local control. Regardless of the exact chronology, Nap's recounting complicates more recent historical consciousness about the movement for local control and the relationships between the community and the Church. Father Remy's argument that the Church had historically provided education with little government support was echoed in the 1970s, where priests like Father Fiori reacted negatively towards what they perceived as sudden provincial interference.¹²

Nap's more complicated relationship with the Church was further illustrated by his recounting of his own schooling experience, where he shared that he attended a separate school that was started by HBC employee Harry Macdonald until the priest moved him to the mission. Nap shared:

But after four days then the priest stop us from going to that school. It stopped because the schoolteacher can't stay here just for two kids, you know. Leo Boulanger, you probably know him, he lives here, and his sister, Elizabeth, and my neighbor here, Gilbert McCallum, and his sister, Geseilla, and me – there was five kids going to that school and two of Harry Macdonald's kids. So the priest he sent for me, and I went there, he said, 'you try to come to this school. You're not too old you should come to school.' Well, I went there two days, but you see I talked pure Cree; but the rest of the people here they say they talk Cree, but they talk French mostly...¹³

The families of Nap Johnson and Gilbert McCallum (who was one of the men who crossed the lake on thin ice with Father Moraud) opted to send them to a separate HBC school rather than the mission. Again, this account of an effort to create a separate school earlier in the twentieth century complicates historical consciousness of the movement for local control in the 1970s and suggests how the parents of Nap Johnson and Gilbert McCallum negotiated Catholicism and their own interests, rather than having a non-questioning faith.

More generally within locally historical consciousness, narratives of local control have focused on the community's relationship with the Church, rather than other agencies. For example, Duane Favel explained, "So then Ile-a-la-Crosse separated you know from the Church in 1976 I believe or 74 in terms of not having the Church play a significant role in education anymore."¹⁴ Just as Nap Johnson's recountings in 1975 complicate his daughter Irene's understanding of his position towards priests and the Church, community members who were

¹² Dennis Gruending, "Dispute Disrupts Ile-a-la-Crosse Community," *Globe and Mail* republished in *Prairie Messenger*, Saskatchewan Catholic Weekly. vol 52, no. 45 April 13 1975.

¹³ "An Interview with Nap Johnson of Ile-a-la-Crosse."

¹⁴ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

involved in advocating for local control and many of the individuals I spoke with had more complicated personal relationships with the Church and the Catholic faith than there is room for in a narrative of the community simply separating from the Church. Even individuals like Duane spoke of the continuing significance of Catholicism in the community. Furthermore, for leaders like Vital Morin, local control was not about splitting from the Church. It was about shifting local identities from those of followers to decision makers and leaders. Vital's son Max Morin explained, "People started talking and eventually they started meeting and there was a little split in the community. People didn't want to split from the Church, some people said, 'well we're not splitting from the Church we just want to have control over the education of our children.'"¹⁵

Local understandings that the takeover resulted in a split within the community, with one side in favour of local control and the other in support of the mission is further complicated by the deeper life histories of the individuals I spoke with. Irene Desjarlais and her husband Ovide supported local control and were critical of secret meetings held between Church officials and others against the movement. As I noted in the previous chapter, Irene was also sympathetic towards those she identified as radicals though she did not include herself in that category. Irene also understood what was happening in the early 1970s, with people going against the Church as oppositional to the values of her father and grandparents. I argued in the previous chapter that Irene and her husband Ovide's more moderate support for local control made their position on the topic, and their views of the Church more ambiguous. Like others who were in favour of local control, Ovide and Irene continued to be Catholic and expressed concern about individuals disrespecting the priest during the takeover. In their interpretation the conflict could be attributed to one individual—Jonas Favel (Jim Favel's brother). They explained:

Ovide: That's what the, that's what was caused by one person. One person turned around the people, yeah.

Irene: He started swearing at the priests I guess.

Ovide: Jonas Favel.

Irene: I never heard him, I never saw him but that's what they said.

Ovide: Went at it the wrong way, should have praised the nuns for teaching all those people, but no he went the other way so he got everybody riled up. There was a big split.¹⁶

¹⁵ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

¹⁶ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse. 25 October 2014.

Ovide's criticism of Jonas Favel is in agreement with Irene's interpretation of her father's stance that you could not say anything against the priests because of the sacrifices they had made for the community. In this interpretation it was not so much the goal of local control, but the fact that Jonas Favel swore at the priests that caused the split. Irene's earlier comment about not saying anything against the priests was not simply an observation of a changing attitude but a view that was also held by her husband. During our 2014 interview, Ovide and Irene were critical of the power of the Church in the community but also of individuals like Jonas Favel who disrespected the priests. Taken together, these aspects of our conversation suggest the complexities of negotiating Catholicism and decolonization at the local level.

Similarly, Tony Durocher's support of Vital Morin and local control was accompanied by his continuing support of the Church and Catholicism in the school. He was sympathetic to the Church's concern that religion would no longer be included in school, and commented that he thought catechism and religion in school could be positive. He explained:

But maybe, from religion wise maybe that's why maybe they was scared that they wouldn't have religion. I don't know how religion is. At the school, but at one time, the nun or the priest used to come in and teach catechism in the afternoon. Which is good I think, myself, I'm still fifty years behind sometimes. But catechism doesn't hurt you. If it teach you to respect each other, love each other, there's nothing wrong with that.¹⁷

Tony also mentioned in passing that his children attended the mission school during the split. It is clear that Tony's position during the split, and that of his family, was more ambiguous than a narrative of pro-local control versus pro-Church allows. By recognizing Tony's Catholic faith as well as the power of the Church in the community, his varying and seemingly contradictory positions can be understood.

Later in our conversation I asked Tony about why he decided to send his children to the mission school and he clarified that the decision was not his, but rather his wife's, indicating the significance of gender and family dynamics in understanding the varying positions that community members took during the conflict. Tony elaborated:

But, I let my wife raise the kids. Just like when they were sick in the hospital not too much, I would show up... And that's the old style I think of the Native people. The wife brings up the kids, so my wife must have made up her mind to take them over there and that was it. I didn't say yes or no. But that didn't last long – maybe a month or less than a month. Well they all went back to the school. And it didn't

¹⁷ Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014.

bother the kids. They were too young to go against each other. Mostly it was older people that happened. And my mother in law worked at the hospital, and my wife worked at the hospital at one time, so they knew the nuns.¹⁸

Within Tony's family he could support Vital Morin and his wife could send their kids to the mission school without conflict. Tony's wife and mother-in law working at the mission was likely a factor in the decision to send their children to the mission school, though Tony places his emphasis on the societal pressures of knowing the nuns rather than the power dynamic of being employed by the Church.

Catholic identity goes deeper than either faith or loyalty to priests. Beyond employing his wife and mother-in law, the Church provided significant social support to Tony's family throughout his life. In our many conversations, Tony has shared aspects of his childhood. Tony's mother was a Dene woman from Patuanak. Because she was born out of wedlock, she grew up at the Beauval Indian Residential School. After Tony's father died, his mother struggled to support them, and Tony described them as being very poor. Tony spent some time living with another family in what he describes as foster care, and was eventually sent to the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse.¹⁹ In contrast to his life before, Tony described his time at the residential school as "the best years of his life."²⁰ There he received three good meals a day and went from being a foster child to making many lifelong friends. Tony is aware that his experiences were not universal, but his story suggests how socio-economic status and family circumstances affected individual relationships with the Church. In this way being a churchgoer is less gendered than related to family and personal histories.²¹

In the previous chapter I discussed some of the tactics used by the Church to threaten community leaders, and I argued that these threats were effective because of the Catholic faith of many of the people in the region. Archbishop Dumouchel²² threatened to pull the Church out of Ile-a-la-Crosse, similar to his response to requests to replace Father Moraud in Patuanak. Despite the archbishop not following through on his threat, individuals like Tony interpret the fact that

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Amanda Fehr Field Notes; Tony Durocher, 9 November, 2014.

²¹ Amanda Fehr Field Notes, 2017.

²² In 1967 Bishop Dumouchel became the archbishop of the newly formed Keewatin-Le Pas Archdiocese.

Ile-a-la-Crosse no longer has a permanent priest within this context.²³ To Tony the Church is punishing the community for the events in the early seventies. He shared:

It separated the mission from the town, from the school, because finally the bishop said if you don't want the mission we'll move. So we had a vote on it, and we wanted the mission to stay. But sure enough, they moved. We don't have a priest anymore; the priest is in Buffalo. So that separated us from the bishop at that time. To religion from what I understand, turn the other cheek and forgive. But I think the bishop took a stand and said if you don't like us then to hell with you, we'll move. And I think that's what happened in the long run, because we don't have a priest anymore. Of course, maybe Buffalo is more of a [geographic] center.²⁴

Significant here is Tony's emphasis that the community wanted the Church to stay and his use of the specific Catholic teaching 'to turn the other cheek' in his subtle critique of the archbishop. Beyond the establishment of the school board, Tony's understanding of the shifting role of the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse is attributed to the movement for local control, rather than Vatican II and other changes within the Archdiocese and the Church more broadly.

Tony's understanding of the priests, and the fact that his children attended the mission school, does not equate to a naivety on his part regarding the potential for the colonial nature of the priests and, at times, the priest's racist treatment of local Indigenous people. During a discussion where Tony shared that some of the DNR officers 'must have been racist', I asked if any of the priests were also racist. Tony shared two stories to illustrate that at one time some of the priests were racist. He explained:

Some of the priests too were racist at one time, from what my mom told me one time. My mom could read good and somebody went to see the priest at one time, I think not that long ago, on account of the boarding school and this priest wrote *les sauvage* that's not even their name what their using, savages he said in French. My mom could write French, could read French. That's what she read, the priest said these savages, they're not even using their own name. Some of them were like that. And I seen one priest when the premier came 1957, Premier Thatcher came; I used to like Thatcher myself. Anyway, he came to Ile-a-la-Crosse. And I was starting the taxi that year so I went to meet him, to give him a ride through town. ...Anyway, when he came out, the priest, I don't know how he got into that position but he was the one introducing the people and he pushed ah, I'm standing outside my taxi taking in everything. He pushed the Natives back a little bit. He introduced all the white people first. This was the priest ah, so they had to kind of

²³This fits in part with Archbishop Lavoie's description that Archbishop Dumouchel "threatened to pull out all the priests, brothers and sisters. Finally, a short-lived separate school was formed in the basement of the hospital. This last development more or less ended the uprising and began a return to some degree of normalcy in the community." Lavoie, *Drumming from Within*, p. 65. Rather than a return to normalcy, Tony draws attention to how Dumouchel's threat continues to be understood by some community members.

²⁴ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

step back, some of them members of local council. Some of them priests were a little bit like that too.²⁵

These two stories illustrate the complexities of negotiating colonialism and racism with Catholic faith. Tony's faith does not make him an unquestioning Elder who accepts the status quo, nor does it make him unware of colonialism and racism in a more general sense.

Just as several of the Elders with whom I worked negotiated efforts at local control with their Catholic faith, leaders like Vital Morin were adamant that they were not against the Church. During the controversy Vital clarified, "I am religious too, but in affairs like this we should be the people to run it. The Church should stick to teaching religion."²⁶ Community members on either side of the conflict had connections to the Church that were often not simple or clear cut. As the president of the temporary school committee, Vital Morin's perspective differs from the stance some of the younger MSS leaders took towards local control. This perspective encourages caution against treating the split in the community as two distinct, uniform groups. Within these groups, there existed differences in age, politics, and beliefs.

This sentiment was further reflected in my interview with Vital's son, Max Morin. Max explained that one of the consequences of Vital's work advocating for local control was that some individuals within the community blamed him for the Church leaving the community. Because of Vital's Catholic faith, the priests leaving the community was painful for him. Max explained:

Yeah, no he wasn't anti, they said stuff about him and at one point I think he was threatened to get excommunicated but the thing that hurt him most I think was eventually the priests started leaving the community. There wasn't that many recruiting priests that wanted to come up north, even today that's La Loche, Ile-a-la-Crosse and Buffalo they share one priest I think. And so they were, people were pointing the finger at him. 'It's your fault the priests aren't here...' So they, I think that's what probably hurt him more than taking a stand for education. Because, people were pointing the finger at him and blaming him for the priests not coming or leaving the community and he had nothing to do with it, he just fought for the right for us to educate our children.²⁷

The conflict for Vital was centered around the priests leaving Ile-a-la-Crosse and the impact that had on a Catholic community. Like Tony, Vital had a complicated relationship with the Church that was affected by his family circumstances and personal history. Max described his father

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Dennis Gruending, "Dispute Disrupts Ile-a-la-Crosse Community."

²⁷ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

being orphaned and then taken by the bishop to the Beauval Residential School, sharing, “He got up to the grade eight or grade nine level, he knew how to read and write and then he joined the army when he was only 17 years of age. But, the point I’m making is he said ‘what’s the use of compensation or residential school stuff, I have no beef against them, they picked me up and raised me and I was an orphan.’ That’s what he told me.”²⁸ Here, Vital’s residential school experience was shaped by his socio-economic status as an orphan. Vital, who was an accomplished leader in the movement for local control during the 1970s, did not advocate for compensation for residential school survivors. This is similar to Tony’s experience, and to that of other Elders of Vital’s generation, like Gilbert “Sarge” McCallum for whom time at the residential schools was contrasted with being poor.²⁹ After the war, Vital married Max’s mother at the 1946 centennial celebration of the Church. Vital was a churchgoer, but he was willing to take a stand for local control within his personal narrative. It was because of his continuing faith that the split in the community hurt him.

In contrast, some of the community members I spoke with have come to interpret the school takeover within a context of leaders who were willing to stand up because of their experiences at residential school. Amongst those in favour of local control there was a range of personal histories and experiences with the Church more generally and residential schools in particular.³⁰ Jim Favel’s wife Marie and son Duane made connections between Jim’s experience at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the positions he was willing to take against the Church.³¹ Duane explained:

There was a lot of strong supporters behind the Church, you know and a lot of good strong Metis leaders who wanted that separation. And certainly having a residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, I don’t have any direct history with that, but I know a lot of people were really against the Church that attended the residential schools based on some of the treatment, and rightfully so I guess. So you had two divisions, it’s not visible so much anymore.³²

In response to my asking why those leaders were able to take that sort of stand, Duane responded, “I couldn’t really tell you, but I think they wanted hope and prosperity for the people in the community, based on their experiences probably before growing up, and witnessing some of the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Gilbert McCallum, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Summer 2006.

³⁰ Chapter eight considers the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse in more detail.

³¹ Marie Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 22 October 2013. Marie Favel noted that she did not go to the residential school at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

³² Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

abuse I guess that the Church probably had did against a lot of people that attended residential school.”³³

Experiences at residential school and other aspects of life histories with the Church caused some community members to leave the Church. For example Clément Chartier described being abused at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, as well as the brutal rape and murder of his mother. He also explained that he did not get to know her because of his years in the residential school system. These experiences caused him to reject the Roman Catholic establishment. He explained, “after what I experienced with him, really I just turned my back on Christianity because of my experiences with them. Yeah, I mean I still held beliefs but I mean it wasn’t this going to church and all this kind of stuff.”³⁴ Clem shared that he turned to Indigenous spiritualism like sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies and talking with Elders in the late 1970s.³⁵ Nonetheless, Clem emphasized his respect for those who continue to find value in the Catholic establishment and the Catholic faith.

Dorothy Dubrule is a lay minister in Ile-a-la-Crosse and shared her struggles with her Catholic faith with me—a faith that other members of her family rejected. She shared, “both my mother and my father were alcoholics, all of my brothers were alcoholics, you know so, why, why did that happen, what went wrong. Was it the Church? Was it, um, residential school?”³⁶ Her mother Georgina was deeply Catholic, but her father never went to church. From other Elders, she learned that her father was orphaned at the age of four and then sent to the Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS). When he was twenty-seven her father lost his pregnant wife and three children to the flu epidemic. He later married Dorothy’s mother, and did not share his personal story with his family.³⁷ Dorothy detailed that some of her brothers rejected the Church and Catholic faith because of what happened to them at residential school. She described her brother Frank as a “diehard” atheist returned to the Church just before he passed away. Her brother Jeff, who I met in 2006, completely rejected Catholicism and found spirituality in Indigenous practices. She shared:

My brother Jeff also, a man that went to boarding school or residential school, was abused at the residential school by the nuns and hated any authority whatsoever

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Clément Chartier, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ottawa, 14 January 2014.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dorothy Dubrule, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 August 2013.

³⁷ Ibid.

and the authority was coming from the Catholic Church, thus that authority was coming from God and Jesus. So he could not relate to God and Jesus in the way a Christian would relate to God and Jesus, his, his spirituality was with nature, with the ancestors, with our grandfathers, with our grandmothers, with the spirit of the Bear, the spirit of you know, that's where he found his spirituality. And he would go to the sweats and he would go to the Sundances and he would do all of this.³⁸

Dorothy also described her own faith as a struggle, and identified the Al-anon movement, which supports the family members of individuals with alcoholism and addictions, as significant in her own journey. This again indicates the complex ways that Catholicism fits into individuals' life stories and how experiences at residential schools can adversely affect survivors' faith.

Despite the split and the sense within local historical consciousness that the movement for local control created a separation between Ile-a-la-Crosse and the mission, in response to my questions about how the events in the early 1970s affected church attendance or personal faith the answer was almost unanimous. Those who went to church before the conflict continued going to church after the conflict. As Ovide and Irene explained:

Irene: Yeah, the people still went to church eh? It didn't affect the ones that were against it like that Jonas wasn't a part of the Church to begin with.

Ovide: the only change now is that once they grow up, they don't go to church. And as they grow old they go back to church.³⁹

According to Ovide and Irene, those who were the most outspoken against the Church, like Jonas Favel, were not part of the local Church community prior to the conflict. In contrast, Ovide and Irene were members of the Church before, during, and after the movement. Similarly Duane Favel explained, "I think that the people who supported the Church continued to attend, and the people who didn't attend certainly, so I don't think... I think the issue of standing up against one another probably hurt a lot of relationships."⁴⁰ Tony Durocher explained that he did not notice if there were people who stopped going to church, while emphasizing that everyone is part of the same faith community because "we were all baptized."⁴¹

Marie Favel similarly explained that continued church attendance related to the fact that they were born Catholic. Here the Catholic community is something that locals have been born and baptized into, though some opted out because of negative experiences at residential schools or with the Church more generally. While local events may have hurt relationships in the

³⁸ Dorothy Dubrue, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 October 2014.

³⁹ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, and Barb Flett, 25 October 2014.

⁴⁰ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

⁴¹ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

community, it did not actually appear to affect membership within the Catholic community. Continued church attendance and Catholic faith fits with my findings that individuals continued to negotiate their faith while supporting local control. Family differences and generational differences factored into how individuals experienced and interpreted the school takeover. Some community members expressed concerns that young people do not go to church anymore. Others, like Ovide, see this as part of a general trend where people stop attending church when they are young and return when they are older. Regardless, the community split following the movement for local control is not seen as the reason for declining church attendance amongst younger generations.⁴²

Marie Favel also emphasized that the takeover of the school during the 1970s and split in the community did not affect her personal faith and that she continues to go to church. When I asked if some stopped going to church, she shared that she thought so, but that it also related to the sweat lodge coming into the community. She identified the return of the sweat lodge with a trip to Alberta with her husband Jim Favel to visit his paternal relatives after his dad passed away in 1975. That was where their family first experienced the sweat lodge and powwow. Marie explained that she had “never involved Indian spirituality before.”⁴³ The couple would later set up their own sweat lodge at their home in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Marie attributed sweat lodges with healing, noting that while some people stopped going to church to attend sweats they gradually returned.⁴⁴ To her son, Mayor Duane Favel, sweat lodges in Ile-a-la-Crosse became particularly important for those who could not go to church because of experiences at residential schools. He shared:

I think a lot of that was a need to have something that people could believe in. Based on their experiences in residential schools, certainly you're not going to go to church and believe and listen... People are seeing that abuse. And I think it's good, I think anything that you do, any ceremony that you go into to try and bring wellness into your life is good.⁴⁵

⁴² Max Morin, 15 July 2014. In response to my question about changes in attendance at the local church, Max explained that the younger generation does not attend as much. He attributed this to a difference in parental enforcement from his time. He shared that he did not force his kids to go to church, stating, “And then when I was going up with my children I used to go every once in a while, take my kids, but I didn't force them. Yeah. Now my grandchildren I haven't seen one of them go to church now. But that's the way that things are sort of evolving.”

⁴³ Marie Favel, 22 October 2013.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

The disappearance and return of sweat lodges in Ile-a-la-Crosse illustrates the colonial aspects of the Catholic Church during much of the twentieth century in opposing traditional spiritual practices, and how Catholicism and traditional spirituality continue to be negotiated as individuals have sought to revitalize sweat lodges in northwestern Saskatchewan since the 1970s. Marie Favel observed that the sweat lodge has been a significant factor in local healing, particularly for trauma from residential schools, the result of which has been some individuals returning to the Church.

Other community members shared some of the challenges associated with bringing sweat lodges into the open in a Catholic community like Ile-a-la-Crosse, where they faced resistance from some local people who saw the practice as oppositional to their Catholic faith. While the Favels learned about sweat lodges from relatives in Alberta during the 1970s and were then involved in bringing sweats to Ile-a-la-Crosse, other families had been holding sweats in secret for generations and began more openly practicing them during the 1970s. Eliza Aubichon, nee Daigneault, shared that her father William Daigneault and other older people used to have sweats when she was younger on an island down the river. She explained, “They used to go there but we weren’t allowed to go close to it. It was too religious for us or something. They [the Elders] wouldn’t let us go there, but they had one, a big one on an island.”⁴⁶ Eliza’s parents were also churchgoers: her father would pray in French and she described her mother as “a good Catholic,” who “used to say the rosary every night. She used to make us sit and say the rosary with her.”⁴⁷ Now in her eighties, Eliza attends sweats and church when the priest is in town. She is also called to come and pray for individuals who are sick or dying. Dorothy Dubrule also shared that sweats were historically practiced in secret. She explained, “but I’m hearing from the Elders that they did have them, except they weren’t in the open, and people did it guardedly so that the Catholic Church didn’t find out about it because they you might be ostracized from the Church.”⁴⁸ Indicating the significance of sweats and the Church to earlier generations for both spiritual as well as potentially socio-economic reasons, Dorothy shared that as a child she did not see sweats in the community and only noticed them when she returned in the 1970s.

Eliza’s nephew Patrick Daigneault continues to run sweat lodges and has travelled around western Canada sharing his knowledge. I first met Patrick at Lac Ste. Anne, where he was

⁴⁶ Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dorothy Dubrule, 9 August 2013.

camping with his wife Patsy, and her sister Liz Durocher with whom I was camping. I only formally interviewed Pat once at his home in Prince Albert. Our conversation focused on the sweat lodge and the work of his grandfather, father, and now him to continue the tradition. Patrick Daigneault was born in 1959 and was raised at the mouth of the Beaver River by his paternal grandparents (Eliza's parents). Pat explained, "we lived in there in Beaver River until we were taken to residential school I can remember that clearly and some years later we moved to the community and everything kind of picked up from there."⁴⁹ Patrick had memories of his time at Beaver River with his grandfather, and unlike his aunt, he was allowed to observe the sweats. He shared:

My grandfather was an herbalist, was a medicine man. He did lodges, secretly and I remember as a kid as far back as two years old my grandma would be cooking for people, preparing feasts. And at three years old, I remember there were people there from Alberta coming in by canoe. And they were all going to north of Patuanak, a place called Cree Lake. But because I wasn't in residential school yet, everything was spoken in pure Cree, which I understood clearly, so I would sit there and I would listen to them speak about different things... They would sit late at night smoking their pipes, singing their songs until I would fall asleep.⁵⁰

Patrick emphasized that through his father's family, the cultural and spiritual aspects of their identity were never lost.

As our conversation continued Patrick outlined the work of his father, Albert Daigneault, to bring the sweat lodge back into the open and some of the challenges that they faced. According to Pat, Albert built the first sweat lodge in Ile-a-la-Crosse that was open to the community. This was initially met with criticism and accusations of devil worship from certain members of the predominantly Catholic community. Patrick explained, "A lot of community was against us. We were told we were worshipping the devil and oh my goodness, it was an ugly, an ugly time. And that went on for years and, but my old man never stopped. It just got bigger and it just got bigger and bigger."⁵¹ Initially, few Elders would speak openly about feasts and gatherings. Similar to the divide over the school, Patrick described the community as torn. Patrick attributes this to the Catholic Church and the fact that the community was, and is still healing.⁵² The sweats continued because of Albert's persistence, but Patrick eventually left Ile-a-la-Crosse. He explained, "I

⁴⁹ Patrick Daigneault, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Prince Albert, 28 August 2014.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Patrick Daigneault, 28 August 2014.

⁵² Ibid.

couldn't practice my culture and my spirituality openly. And in a way where I can grow and my children can grow without having people judge them."⁵³

As our conversation continued, Patrick explained that Ile-a-la-Crosse had changed significantly over the years, from about ten percent of the community supporting what his father was doing with the sweat lodge to at least ninety percent of the community today. The Catholic Church's increasing acceptance of and incorporation of Indigenous spirituality, beginning with Vatican II as well as work in the region by clergy like Archbishop Lavoie, were significant in this shift, though Patrick noted that some local hardliners still refused to accept changes. Pat shared:

It wasn't very long ago when they started to introduce the sweet grass and the smudging and the drum within the church and that really turned a lot of people 'whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, what's going on? What are you guys doing?' But the thing about it, it was the priests who said it was okay to bring in the sweet grass and the drum into that, into the church so that also tore the hardliners, you know the hardcore Roman Catholics within my community. It tore them up and like its still like that today, I still sense that today.⁵⁴

Here, individuals who Pat identifies as hardline Catholics have difficulty accepting changes within the Church that do not fit with their views of Catholicism, complicating views of hardliners and older generations as deferent to Church authorities. More generally there continues to be a range of ways that community members understand negotiate Catholicism and Indigenous spiritualities.

Patrick's depiction of hardliners and traditionalists was further complicated by his discussion of his mother, who he describes as a "hardline" and a "hardcore Catholic," and her introduction of the Lord's prayer into his father's sweat lodge. Patrick's mother, Marie Louise Daigneault, made sure that her children attended church every Sunday and brought priests, nuns, and even the archbishop into her husband's sweat lodge. Patrick explained:

And she started introducing the Lord's Prayer into our sweat you know. You know and it kind of puts a smile to my face every time I think about that because she had her own way of doing things, because she was like a mom and what she said it went. Right, so one day the old man was asked to say the Lord's Prayer in our sweat, well in the old man's sweat and the old man was kind of hesitant he said, 'I can't do that mom.' 'No, you say the Lord's Prayer. Isn't this the Lord's house?' You know the sweat lodge? So, eventually the old man was reluctant to you know to start saying the Lord's Prayer in our sweat lodge. But he did you know and so because we were all well versed in the Roman Catholic, in the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Church, we all knew the Lord's Prayer, so everybody said the Lord's Prayer. And it's still at times today, before my sweat you know I'll sit outside and I'll say the Lord's Prayer. And I acknowledge that you know, because it came from my mom and it kind of stuck with me.⁵⁵

Patrick's recounting of his mom introducing the Lord's Prayer into his father's sweat lodge, and that practice becoming a personal tradition for him to honour his mother, illustrates the ways that Catholicism and Indigenous spirituality are negotiated within families. It also shows how the Catholic faith and practices of earlier generations are sometimes continued because of a sense of family tradition and in memory of loved ones. I have observed the tendency to incorporate Catholic prayer and sacraments as ways to remember parents and grandparents more generally, and to continue family traditions. This appears particularly so where descendants continue going on pilgrimages to places like Lac Ste. Anne or pray when passing shrines to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

My conversation with Patrick then turned to more generally discussing mixing beliefs in the sweat lodge, and Patrick shared that for some culturalists and traditionalists, "it's almost like forbidden. It's forbidden to use the Lord's Prayer in the sweat lodge."⁵⁶ Patrick thought that his grandfather, William Daigneault, was okay with it, explaining, "He said the Lord's Prayer, he did his beads, he did his rosary you know."⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Patrick had the sense that allowing the Lord's Prayer in the sweat lodge was something that he was not supposed to do, but that he does regardless. I followed up with asking him who said he was not allowed to blend practices in the sweat lodge. It appears it was other culturalists and traditionalists that he has worked with in other parts of the province, rather than Patrick's own ancestors. He reflected:

Who says, who says I can't do these things? I will stop if the grandfathers or the grandmothers tell me in the sweat lodge or give me a message and tell me you gotta stop, and then I will stop. But obviously they haven't stopped me in the last thirty years you know and ...or my dad, we have never been stopped, we have never been told ha you can't do that no. We have never been told by our creator and our grandfathers and grandmothers in our sweat lodges the way we preach the way we teach things, *not once*. But when you flip the coin to the other Elders and culturalists, sweat lodge people, ceremonial people will criticize us.⁵⁸

Within Patrick's own family, and for many people in Ile-a-la-Crosse, the Lord's Prayer in the sweat lodge is part of how individuals negotiate their faith and family traditions. However, for

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

other Indigenous traditionalists in the province, as with conservative members of the local Catholic community, Indigenous spirituality and Catholicism are meant to be separate.

In Ile-a-la-Crosse, both Indigenous spirituality such as smudging and Catholic prayers are used at public events, and most people do not differentiate between the two. When I asked Duane Favel how groups determine if they should use more Catholic or traditional elements, he clarified that it depended on who is invited and the purpose of the event. He shared:

Weddings and that we still use the priest, people get married in church. If you can't then you use a JP, but a priest still plays a significant role in that. But if you have community gatherings they'll invite Elders to do a smudging ceremony, and stuff like that so, and they're well accepted within the community, I don't think people differentiate in terms of what's happening and they recognize that it's a prayer.⁵⁹

In this way, context and audience determines how Catholicism and Indigenous spirituality are publicly negotiated today. Since my first trip to Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006, practices like giving tobacco to Elders, smudging, and growing tobacco have become more apparent.

In Patuanak, sweat lodges and drumming are also being revitalized. Rod Apesis worked with Patrick Daigneault's family in his efforts to bring back the sweat lodge. Like in Ile-a-la-Crosse some community members have memories of historical sweat lodges, but others do not. Ovide Wolvernine has memories of herbalists, but not of sweat lodges. To Ovide, Indigenous spirituality like sweats were practiced further south, by people who were not Catholics, and the traditions that he grew up with, and sees as local traditions, were square dancing and fiddle music. He explained, "There was no drum, no nothing. Square dance, fiddle music. That's all I can remember."⁶⁰ Later in our conversation Ovide shared a story of Grandpa Pot Belly, who he explained was a medicine man who was afraid of the priests and may have had sweat lodges.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Duane Favel, 16 July 2014.

⁶⁰ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014.

⁶¹ Ovide explained: "Oh yeah, Old Pot Belly [laughs]. They say he used to live down here in a tent, not too far from the church here. Well outside the yard of the priest, that's where he used to live they said. I haven't seen him, but there's people who said, I think that old Sarazine Ratt probably seen him. He was a good medicine man I heard, he cured a lot of people But I guess, what I heard that he, he was kind of afraid of the robe there, the priest. So he kind of changed I think, but he, he did some, a few things that I know. Like one time the wind come up and he was, he had a little canoe, small little canoe they say and probably gravel point, people were out there, and these big waves, finally they seen some body and they see the head, then down again, here was this old man. So they told him, 'Grandpa you're not afraid? You shouldn't be paddling all by yourself in that big waves.' Oh, he says, 'when did you hear of a loon drown.' So you know he was he turned himself into a loon I guess or something. That one, when he was making medicine, and maybe he had a sweat lodge or something, maybe he did, cause you used to hear a loon." Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

Jacob Estralshenan had memories of sweat lodges and had learned stories of strong medicine men, like Crowhead.⁶² Jacob shared a story about a long time ago when the priests stopped sweat lodges and drumming. Even though they are being revitalized in the community today, they are different. He shared:

Well the priest, well that's how everything went. Just like drumming, well there's no more drumming around, well now its start picking up. Rod is doing that, and it starts picking up. But young people are learning how to sing the songs. But before there was nothing. Long time ago they used to have that sweat lodge, the priest stopped that. Said it was no good for the people and stuff. Long time ago we had sweat lodges, a person that sweats used to sit in there and used to hear him. We were so strong. The medicine men were so strong. Could cure a person.⁶³

Jacob knew stories of powerful medicine men, and recognized the hypocrisy in the priests not believing Dene stories even though they expected the Dene to believe Catholic stories. Although sweat lodges and drumming are returning to Patuanak, Jacob went on to explain that it is not the same as it was.⁶⁴

More generally there is a range in how individuals in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse understand the role of Indigenous spirituality in their communities, and how they negotiate that spirituality in relation to Catholicism. Some individuals are Catholic, and want nothing to do with sweats, sweet grass or drumming; others practice both and do not seem to distinguish between their prayers – rather they pick what is the most powerful at the time. Some see a similarity between Indigenous practices and the Catholic faith, and still others have rejected the Catholic Church or been rejected by that Church. This negotiation is further complicated by less formal aspects of Catholicism that are widely practiced in the region, such as turning to local saint Father Moraud or the Blessed Virgin Mary for more direct links to God. In this way, Catholicism continues to be visible in northwest Saskatchewan. This presence is evident in Marian shrines, and sightings, even though many communities no longer have a resident priest.

Changes in the Church since Vatican II have resulted in more local involvement in the Church, and an increasing emphasis on New Testament teachings and enculturation holds more space for Indigenous spirituality. While some community members commented on the positive changes to the Church, especially in terms of power dynamics, others have been critical of the lay

⁶² Discussed in the introductory chapter.

⁶³ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

clergy. Dorothy Dubrule, who is part of the lay clergy in Ile-a-la-Crosse, commented on some of the positive changes in the local Church, as it has become less authoritarian, explaining:

We don't have that rigid, keep your mouth shut kind of thing. You know you walk in, you still have to be respectful and you still need to be reverent when you're approaching the tabernacle because for the Catholics that's where we hold our blessed sacrament. So you still need to have that reverence and that respect but, you know it's not so much like now you have to totally be like a little mouse.⁶⁵

Similarly, Ovide Wolverine, who was involved in his local parish council and broader diocesan consultations, noted changes in the church in Patuanak, making for a more inclusive, less judgmental space:

Just lately I think it's changed now the priest they're getting to understand that we all make mistakes and they say when they're preaching that God died for every one of us. So that our sins may be forgiven if we did wrong. That Jesus died for us, they were saying. But now they're starting to find that out. We had a lot of meetings, like about these things when we used to go to Winnipeg.⁶⁶

Ovide had mentioned earlier in our conversation that he disagreed with the priests at these meetings, so I followed up on that point. He clarified, "Oh yes, well like what I didn't like was that the old people, uh, lay people you know. But now it's happening. So I had to do that sometimes."⁶⁷ Here, Ovide's concern was the increasing reliance on lay clergy rather than actual priests. Eliza Aubichon shared that sometimes she will go to the sweat lodge if the priest is not going to be in Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁶⁸

Catholicism continues to be visible in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. On Good Friday in Ile-a-la-Crosse, the Stations of the Cross are enacted and the rosary is recited while participants walk seventeen kilometres from the shrine of the Virgin Mary at the Narrows to the church in Ile-a-la-Crosse.⁶⁹ A procession of cars accompanies the walkers with Elders who are not able to walk. Participants take turns carrying the cross, and I was told that carrying the cross would bring healing and good luck, especially if you carried it into the church at the end of the procession. I participated in the walk in 2012, which was followed by mass at the church led by the priest. The

⁶⁵ Dorothy Dubrule, 8 October 2014.

⁶⁶ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

⁶⁹ The Narrows is near where the road from Ile-a-la-Crosse meets the main highway from the Beauval forks to Buffalo Narrows.

priest did not participate in the Stations of the Cross, and some community members who participated in the walk did not go to the church after.

I interviewed the late Don Favel when I first visited Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006. When I returned to the community in 2010, Don was leading the local efforts to have the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school recognized, and even suggested the possibility of taking the Church to court. He was on the floor of the House of Commons with Metis National Council president Clément Chartier in 2008 during Harper's apology. Don spoke publicly about being abused at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and of other negative experiences with priests throughout his life. When I interviewed him in 2006 he shared how when his son committed suicide in 1995, the local priest told him his son would go to Hell. Seeing a vision of his son with Angel wings later comforted Don, and challenged the authority of the priest. Don told me he shared his experience with others in the sweat lodge, where people come together to pray and help each other. He explained, "things happen, people explain them. If it happened to you then that's what it was."⁷⁰ Don had a complex relationship with the Catholic faith, local priests, and the Church. I later learned that he used to carry the cross part of the way during the Easter processions. Don passed away in June of 2010. He was not buried in the Catholic cemetery in Ile-a-la-Crosse, but the considerably smaller cemetery at McKay Point.

The Blessed Virgin Mary remains visible in the northwest in the shrines, apparitions, and pilgrimages, even after the conflict in Ile-a-la-Crosse regarding the takeover of the school in the 1970s and with the history of residential schools in the region. Mary and the faith can be seen as healing and beautiful, and perhaps ironically a solution to some of the legacies of colonialism such as suicide, alcohol and drugs, at both the community and individual level. Respect for Mary, and traditions such as stopping at local shrines and attending pilgrimages, also relate to efforts to continue family traditions and connect to parents and grandparents even after they have passed away. Considering local stories of Marian appearances, shrines, and pilgrimages draws attention to the complicated relationship between Catholicism, decolonization, Indigeneity, life history, and healing to reveal that despite colonialism dividing communities and families in the northwest, Catholic faith elements such as the Blessed Virgin Mary continue to bring people

⁷⁰ Don Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 20 June 2006.

together, whether out of faith, quests for healing, respect, or a need to connect to the traditions and practices of parents and grandparents.⁷¹

Intercessory prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary and lessons about Marian apparitions in Europe were part of the Catholic faith taught by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) and at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Former chief of English River, Elder, and educator, Ralph Paul is critical in his manuscript of the indoctrination to the Virgin Mary at BIRS, which he attended for ten years.⁷² He writes, “There were two months in the BIRS school year that was set aside to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. This was one lady that was drummed into us in all the ten years that I was in BIRS.”⁷³ Later in his manuscript he connected the prominence of the Virgin Mary at the school to the many roadside shrines dedicated to her throughout northwestern Saskatchewan.

In addition to pictures, statues, special prayer beads to say Hail Mary’s in Dene, Cree, English and Latin, and Hymns, Ralph Paul recalled a visiting statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Quebec at the school. He explained:

In the late 1940’s, a ‘miraculous’ statue of the BVM [Blessed Virgin Mary] was displayed in our school. This statue was from Quebec and its supposedly had opened its eyes. We really believed this at that time. We were children. There was much singing and praying at this time. There was also a period when the story of the BVM appearing in Fatima was exploited by these catholic clerics.⁷⁴

Travelling statues of Our Lady of the Cape and Our Lady of Fatima were brought to Ile-a-la-Crosse on July 8th 1950, and May 13th to 15th 1967 respectively.⁷⁵ Marian devotion directly relates to official Church teachings in the region. In more recent years, local people have gone to places like Fatima and Guadalupe on their own pilgrimages, and there are accounts of the Blessed Virgin Mary appearing in Ile-a-la-Crosse and throughout the region, indicating more local autonomy in relationships with the Blessed Virgin Mary and in local interpretations of Church teachings.

⁷¹ Amanda Fehr and MacKinley Darlington, “Encountering Mary: Apparitions, Roadside Shrines, and the Métis of the Westside,” *Saskatchewan History* (2009).

⁷² See Appendix A for more information about Chief Ralph Paul.

⁷³ Ralph Paul, Unpublished Manuscript, copy provided to the author by Ralph Paul, p. 67

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 87.

⁷⁵ “The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years,” Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996, accessed 10 February 2017 <http://Desjarlais.jkcc.com/rcindex.html>.

In contrast to Ralph Paul's view that children were indoctrinated into Marian devotion at BIRS, to Jim Durocher the Blessed Virgin Mary is more in line with Indigenous beliefs than other aspects of Catholicism. He explained:

There's still a lot of belief, but a lot of that belief is starting to turn the Aboriginal way because a lot of people are saying instead of saying Jesus and using those terms like they use in confession they say the Creator. A lot of people are talking about the Creator, Manitou. Manitou is the Aboriginal person, God, you know and he was in charge of good for animals, good for the land, had medicines over there for people to go to use, you know everybody lives that way and that's how a lot of these shrines are like that it's not a big problem for people to say well I saw the Blessed Virgin or I pray to the Blessed Virgin because the Blessed Virgin is from the same place as the Creator and they sort of work together we can use her to ask for favours from that sort of thing. So that sort of symbolism is okay, it's there.⁷⁶

Jim recognizes that there is a lot of belief in the community, something that others have also noted in interviews. To him, the Virgin Mary is appropriate symbolism within Indigenous spirituality, though the intercessory role he describes remains consistent with those who position her within the Catholic faith.

Many of the shrines to the Blessed Virgin Mary were built following the events of the 1970s to help remember and honor loved ones who had passed away, to mark places where accidents occurred, and generally to protect communities. Most communities in the northwest have a larger Marian shrine near the entrance. Elders and community members pray and make the sign of the cross when they pass the shrines for protection. In response to my question about the shrine on the road to Patuanak, Ovide Wolverine explained:

Oh yeah, yeah, somebody left it there one time so like people have a lot of faith and the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I have a lot of respect for the Virgin Mary. She's the mother of Jesus. So somebody left it out there, so there wouldn't be so much accidents, after an accident or two they put that up there. But, like I said, you have to have a belief.⁷⁷

Ovide, like others when discussing prayers to Mary, emphasized the need for belief.⁷⁸ More generally, there is a range of ways local people situate the Blessed Virgin Mary into their historical consciousness, and negotiate her intercessory role with Catholicism and Indigeneity.

⁷⁶ Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 25 September 2012.

⁷⁷ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

⁷⁸ See discussions of belief in chapter one, and chapter five.



Figure 7.1: Marian Shrine on the highway to Patuanak, fall 2012. Photo by author.

To Mary Estralshenan, prayers to the Virgin Mary were something she learned from her father and grandmother, but they somewhat contradicted the prayers and teachings she learned from Father Moraud. She shared:

My dad told me when I was sixteen years old...if you can't do it ask Mary to help you. Mary will help you and it will be easy for you to do it. Sometimes I would think about it. What does he mean ask Mary to help me? She's not around here. How could she help me, she's not even here, she's in heaven. Father Moraud told us that Mary is in Heaven with the Son. So I thought how could she help me? My grandma told me too that if you're lonely ask Mary to help you. She brought me up and taught me a lot.⁷⁹

Later in her narrative she focused on prayers that she learned from Father Moraud. Apparent in Mary Estralshenan's recounting is the significance placed on intercessory prayers to the Virgin Mary by her father and her grandmother. It seems that she struggled to fully accept the family practice because they contradicted what she learned from Father Moraud. In other words, official Church teachings challenged family practices of making intercessory prayers to the Virgin Mary.

Other Elders from Patuanak spoke of praying to the Virgin Mary, especially within the

⁷⁹ "Mary Estrosoaire," *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p. 116.

context of concerns for younger generations, or for assistance with healing.⁸⁰ Praying the rosary and asking Mary for help were things that individuals could do outside of the Church, and these practices occurred in the absence of a full time priest historically and even more recently.⁸¹ Many of the people I interviewed also noted healing as a reason for praying to Mary.

In 2002, the owners of the farm located outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse reported an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared on their greenhouse outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse. They noticed the image upon returning home from a wake in the community. Their farmyard was soon filled with believers coming to see what they considered to be a miracle. Individuals describe how the image of Mary shimmered, reflecting like light on a tin roof and being overwhelmed by a smell of roses. Beyond the sight and smell, people reported a feeling that had been felt by some at earlier pilgrimages and holy sites. Over the next few days, people came from neighboring communities. For several years after Mary would periodically appear on windows, and even garage doors, throughout the province's northwest. To some, this was regarded as an opportunity to be healed by the Virgin Mary of illnesses like cancer. For others, this was the Virgin Mother's loving response to the epidemic of suicide and drug and alcohol addictions in the community and the region.⁸² According to Elder Georgina Morin, Dorothy Dubrule's mother, Mary would not speak until the young people in the community stopped using drugs and alcohol,⁸³ and when she did finally speak, her message emphasised family and prayer. At 10:30 pm on August 22nd, 2003, the Virgin Mary spoke to six young children at the Greenhouse shrine. Wearing a white dress with blue and white pearls on the veil, she reportedly said, "I'm looking at your family," and told them to "love all your family and pray with your family."⁸⁴ The reasons community members

⁸⁰ For example Yvonne Paul explains, "Today I wish my grandchildren could live a good happy life. I tell them to pray and go to church and to respect each other. I tell them not to go a day without praying, even if they don't go to church at least make the sign of the cross and to remember the Virgin Mary. Praying is very important." "Yvonne Paul," *Voice of the Elders*, p. 154.

⁸¹ As I discussed in chapter two, Willow Heart's prediction has been interpreted by some as explaining the decline of Catholicism, and by others as a call for local people to be able to pray by themselves so that they are prepared for the time when there will no longer be priests. See my discussion in chapter two for more details.

⁸² Doris Desjarlais, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 19 June 2006; Liz Durocher, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 19 June 2006; Interview with community member by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 August 2006; Marie Favel, Interview by Jodie Crew, MacKinley Darlington, and Amanda Fehr, Near Ile-a-la-Crosse, 21 June 2006. See Fehr and Darlington, "Encountering Mary."

⁸³ Georgina Morin, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 August 2006.

⁸⁴ Liz Durocher typed ten points of what the Virgin Mary said and did at the farm on this date. Several community members had this list in their homes in 2006. The information included here is taken from that list, copy in authors' possession.

give for Mary's appearances relate to healing from the legacies of colonialism, as well as regaining prayer and connections to family.

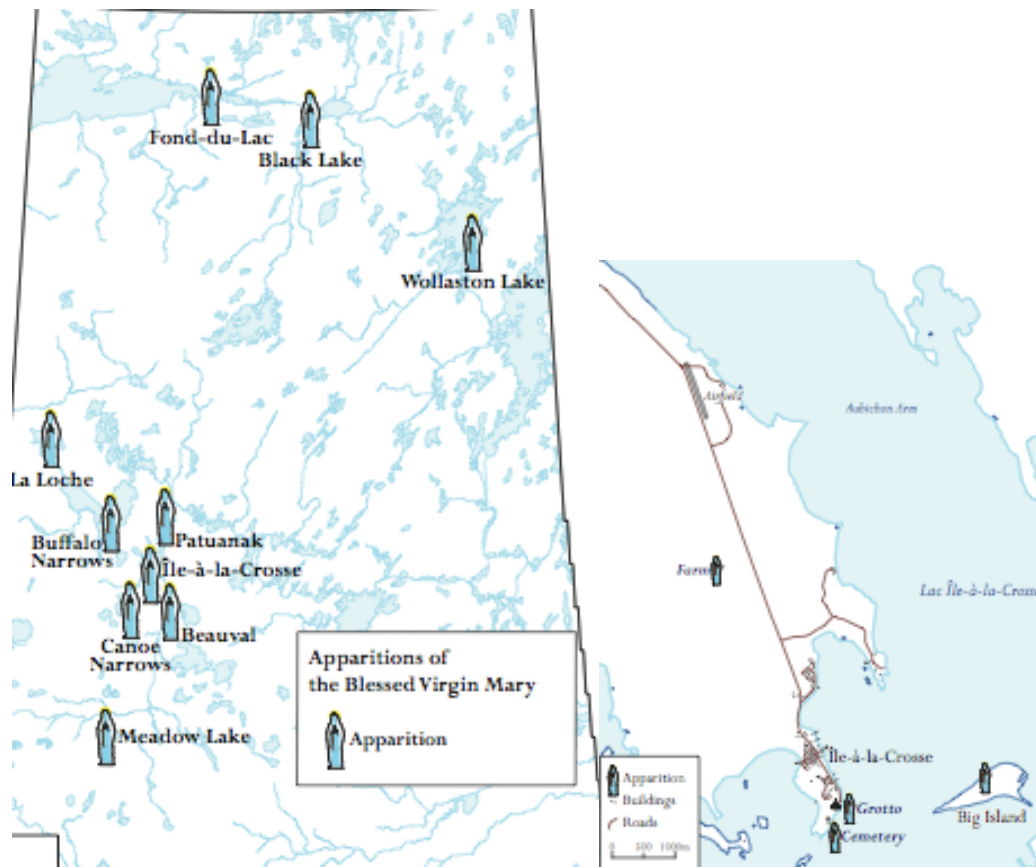


Figure 7.2: Maps of reported appearances of Mary in the Northwest and more specifically in and around Ile-a-la-Crosse. Prepared by Andrew Dunlop for the *Atlas of the Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan*.

Dorothy Dubrule and her mother Georgina Morin had different relationships with the Blessed Virgin Mary. I interviewed Georgina in 2006 about appearances of Mary in Ile-a-la-Crosse and I more recently spoke with her daughter Dorothy about her (Georgina's) faith. Dorothy explained, "My mother went to church. My mother had a spirituality about her that she shared with us as children by teaching us what is right and wrong, by teaching us the prayers. By teaching us to be as respectful to others as we possibly can be, and that was her spirituality."⁸⁵ Dorothy provided more historical context for her mother's life, noting that Georgina worked at the mission for a time, was married when she was fourteen or fifteen, had an abusive marriage, and that she struggled with alcoholism. She also participated in the sweat lodge and introduced

⁸⁵ Dorothy Dubrule, 9 August 2013.

Dorothy to that practice. Georgina's son Jeff Morin (Dorothy's brother) was sexually abused at the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school. Dorothy shared that her mother did not share very much about her life prior to her marriage. Georgina left her family when Dorothy was fourteen. Later in her life, Georgina prayed every day, sometimes two or three times. She believed in the intercessions of Mary. After visiting Medjugorje, Georgina made it her mission to pray for the children. Dorothy explains:

Her [Georgina's] insight to the whole thing was you know beautiful. But what she came away with was that she had to daily pray for the children. Children of Ile-a-la-Crosse, children of the world. So that became her mission...You know and every time she'd see something happening you know with young people, she'd immediately say we have to pray for that, I have to pray for that. And so she'd start praying for the young people. And she continued to do so for quite a long time until she became sick and then after that you know she didn't really talk much. But I know a few times she would say you have to continue praying for the children.⁸⁶

In this way Georgina's interpretation of Mary appearing at the farm fit within her earlier encounters with Mary and personal mission. Although one could easily view Georgina Morin as a hardline Catholic, her personal history suggests the complex ways that she has negotiated Catholicism throughout her life. As was noted earlier, her view was acceptance and prayer, but she prayed in the church and the sweat lodge, and saw intercessory prayers to the Virgin Mary as a way to effect change in her community and around the world.

Dorothy's differing relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary provides a caution against generalizing about local faith in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Dorothy described her relationship with Mary as rocky, remarking that intercessory prayers to her are difficult. She posited that this could be because she did not have a strong relationship with her own mother, and more generally as a child did not connect with other women. Despite this, Dorothy saw Mary at the farm outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2002. She shared:

So I know that there's something there, but in my heart of hearts, I'm going yes she is the mother of my Lord, and I just can't go to her. I just have to go to my Lord. I just have to go to my Jesus and say this is what I need. I do go, I do say the rosary, and I say let's pray for my family, let's pray for friends, let's pray for you know whatever, Louis⁸⁷ and I will. But for myself when it's personal prayer,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Louis is Dorothy's husband.

in the closet kind of thing, my conversation goes directly to God my father, God Jesus my brother, God my savior, however I address Him.⁸⁸

Dorothy's interpretation of Mary's appearance at the farm differed slightly from others like her mother. In response to my question of why she thought Mary appeared, she reflected:

I think because she loves us. You know, that she loves the children, the children of the world. I think that she's protecting in the capacity that she has in whichever way you know, interceding for world peace, peace in Ile-a-la-Crosse. To show us that you know that she's there. Maybe, maybe our Lord can't appear to us, I don't know. Or maybe he can, but it's too much for us to handle.⁸⁹

Dorothy's interpretation of Mary's appearance at the farm suggests that community members made sense of that event within the context of their own relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary and understandings of their faith.

Beyond Mary's appearance at the farm, some individuals tell stories of personal experiences with the Blessed Mother. Leon Gardiner shared with me in 2006 that Mary appeared to him a couple of times. In the early 1990s, she appeared out of a cloud at the Beauval Forks and in 2001 on his hand.⁹⁰ Mary helped him with his own addictions and wanted him to work to help youth in the community. When historian MacKinley Darlington and I met with Leon in 2006 he shared with us that the Blessed Virgin had told him to share his story with us.⁹¹ Leon interpreted Mary's appearance at the farm within his own experiences with Mary and his personal mission.



Figure 7.3: Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the shrine at the Narrows. Photo by MacKinley Darlington.

⁸⁸ Dorothy Dubrule, 9 August 2013.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Leon Gardiner is the son of Agnes Gardiner whose stories of Father Moraud were discussed in chapters four and five. Leon Gardiner, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 August 2006.

⁹¹ MacKinley Darlington and I did not include that Leon told us he knew we would becoming because of the Virgin Mary in our original article. Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

Community members have also historically sought out the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Anne, and healing by going on pilgrimages. By healing, I mean both specific health concerns but also healing from historical traumas, such as experiences at residential schools. People most often participate in the St. Laurent (Saskatchewan) and Lac Ste. Anne (Alberta) pilgrimages. These are places and opportunities for prayer and healing, to address addictions and other personal struggles, to gather holy water, to bear witness to miracles, as well as places to visit with friends and family members, listen to music, travel, and continue family traditions. To many people these places are important because they attended pilgrimages with their parents or grandparents. According to “The Religious History of St John Baptiste Parish,” Metis and Indigenous people from Ile-a-la-Crosse have been going on pilgrimages to Lac Ste Anne since 1889.⁹²

Historically people from Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak would travel to Lac Ste. Anne together. Max Morin provided pilgrimaging together as an example of the connections between communities prior to government efforts to separate them along status lines.⁹³ In this way, pilgrimages to Lac Ste. Anne historically cut across status lines, illustrating similarities and connections between communities. When I spoke with Jacob Estralshenan in 2013 he explained that he had not missed a pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne since 1958. He described how when they started attending they paid five dollars to travel with someone from Ile-a-la-Crosse by truck all the way to Lac Ste. Anne. He laughed when he explained the price was eventually increased to seven dollars and now he goes free of charge as an Elder and member of English River First Nation.⁹⁴ Today the town of Ile-a-la-Crosse fundraises for Elders to go and the town provides additional funds depending on how much money they can fundraise.

I attended the pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne for two summers (2012 and 2013) with my friend Liz Durocher and her family. We set up the Durocher/Daigneault camp with Liz’s sister Patsy, and her husband Patrick Daigneault, close to the Ile-a-la-Crosse Elder’s camp. The pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne lasts for almost a week, with people arriving early to secure prime camping spots. Journeying to Lac Ste. Anne now only takes a day to travel (with stops in Prince Albert and Edmonton) rather than several days. Communities fundraise to support Elder travel by

⁹² According to “The Religious History of St John the Baptiste Parish” local people had been attending the Ste. Anne pilgrimage for 107 years. This was published in 1996.

⁹³ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁹⁴ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

bus or van. A camp for Elders, where meals are provided, is also set up. English River First Nation books rooms for Elders in nearby hotels and buses them out to the pilgrimage site daily.

Mass is said three times daily, and different communities take turns hosting the mass. While some attend mass every day, and many more than once a day, others only attend for the Dene language mass or the Michif language mass, or listen to the music blared by loudspeakers across the campsite. A highlight of the pilgrimage is the blessing of the lake. Priests bless the water, and after this blessing, pilgrims of all ages journey into the lake to fill containers to take home in old water and pop bottles. Once the lake is blessed the water is considered holy water. Faithful who are not able to make the journey will request family members and friends bring them holy water from the lake. One can also ask one of the many priests for an additional blessing, and people will often try to find a familiar face for this - such as Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie. The archbishop remains a popular cleric who regularly attends the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage. Some people head out further into the lake to search for the rock where St Anne appeared, confident that if it is found they will be receive more blessings. Holy water from the lake, as well as holy oil and other religious items purchased at the pilgrimage, is brought back to friends and family members who are not able to attend and for personal use throughout the year. I have seen Elders provide younger family members with holy water and holy oil, as well as instructions for prayer, to help with health problems and other challenges.



Figure 7.4: Pilgrims at the blessing of the lake, Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage 2012. Photo by author.

The pilgrimage is also a large campout with visiting and sharing. Dried meat and fish is for sale if one knows where to find it. Some pilgrims perform pipe ceremonies at their camp and there is often drumming into the evening. To some, Lac Ste. Anne is a spiritually powerful place that predates the arrival of missionaries and the appearance of Ste. Anne. Candles can be lit to offer prayers in memory of loved ones to burn throughout the pilgrimage, and prayers are also offered for family members, especially young people, who are seen to be struggling. Near the official camp a wide range of vendors set up to sell food and a range of goods. This area is commonly referred to as “China Town,” and is critiqued by some as part of the increasing commercialization of the pilgrimage. Trips are also made into Edmonton for shopping and bingo, even though some do not think gambling should be part of the pilgrimage experience.

The Durocher/Daigneault families shared memories with me of coming to Ste. Anne with their late mom, and in this way the pilgrimage was also understood as a family tradition. Others whom I have interviewed shared memories of attending Lac Ste. Anne with family members who have since passed away. When I asked Ovide Wolverine why he decided to start going to Ste. Anne, he responded:

Well, my mother of course. Them days, it was not easy. So my dad, I guess was not feeling well so I went with her to pitch a tent and stuff like that, to help her, water and this and that. So, that’s when I started. I liked it so, you meet friends and then you haven’t seen your friends for so many years and here all of a sudden here he is, ‘well hello there.’ It’s good for a little holiday also.⁹⁵

Since his mother has passed away, Ovide has continued to go to Lac Ste. Anne. Ovide is Catholic, but the practice of going to Lac Ste. Anne is additionally a way for him to continue a family tradition as and to have a holiday, aspects of attending the pilgrimage that are significant for other community members.

I first got to know Eliza Aubichon at Lac Ste. Anne, when I helped Liz drive some of the ladies to Bingo in Edmonton. Later when I interviewed Eliza about her history of going to Lac Ste. Anne, she shared that there were some years when she could not go because she had to work and support her children, drawing attention to the role of socio-economics as well as family dynamics in the ability of community members to attend events like the pilgrimage. Eliza shared that the first time she went to Lac Ste. Anne was with her Sister Monique. Eliza explained: “she [Monique] was there [at Lac Ste. Anne] before, she had been there quite sometime before she

⁹⁵ Ovide Wolverine, 11 February 2014.

asked me to go. She had asked me but I didn't have time I was so busy working. Trying to support my kids go to school."⁹⁶

When I asked Jacob why he went to Lac Ste. Anne, he responded, "I like to pray. For my people for that younger generation. I pray to be a role model, wiser...but I don't think it lasts anymore."⁹⁷ In some way his motivations fit with Georgina Morin's reasons for praying to the Virgin Mary, and her interpretation of Mary appearing at the farm. Even though Jacob continued to pray for younger people and to be a role model, he was resigned to the fact that Church attendance was slackening down, a theme that came up throughout our conversation that I have drawn attention to in earlier chapters. To illustrate his efforts at being a role model in Patuanak, Jacob shared a story about singing the gospel songs at the Church. He explained:

Just like I go to a Mass service I do the gospel songs in Dene. Only two of us, Mary Jane Campbell and me. When Mary Jane is not here, I'm always available, I go sing. Well there was an old man. Name was George Paul, when there was a service he was singing in Dene. After he was getting old he came up to me, and I didn't know much about them gospel songs, like in Dene. I didn't know much. So he asked me to take on. I told him, 'I don't know, I don't know how to read much.' I knew a little bit, but (pause). So he said 'you'd know right away,' so sure enough. Just like now, I'm sitting here (taps table) if you open a book and tell me to read, I won't know much. But that's another thing that's funny. But when I go to church when I open a book of gospel songs them words are just like I know how to, Like when I'm home here, I won't know how. I don't know. So, I took over after that old man passed on."⁹⁸

Jacob's account emphasizes local knowledge and access to religious power. Like his other stories belief is central to this one, as are his continuing efforts to contribute to the local church in spite of a complicated relationship with the Church as an institution and awareness of historical colonialism. Belief is central to Jacob's personal understanding of his Catholic faith, and the issue that differentiates his Catholicism from Church authorities. His reflections on going to Lac Ste. Anne for over fifty years and his continuing prayer and efforts in his local church complicate our understandings of decolonization and how Indigenous communities continue to negotiate Catholicism by revealing the personal significance and meaningfulness of Catholic prayer for some Elders.

⁹⁶ Eliza Aubichon, 16 October 2012.

⁹⁷ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

A year after my interview with Jim Durocher about the school takeover, I had an opportunity to interview his wife Leonie Durocher nee Desjarlais⁹⁹ in their home about a pilgrimage she had taken to St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal in hopes to cure her cancer. Jim participated in that conversation and it highlighted components of his life and faith that I had missed when interviewing him about the school takeover. Leonie was ill when we spoke, and tired easily, but wanted to share her pictures and talk about her trip. This meeting complicated what I thought I knew about Jim from our earlier conversation, as Leonie described the efforts her husband made to make her wish come true, and the conversation shifted from one of politics to one of prayer and hope in divine intervention.¹⁰⁰ Leonie was born in Beauval, but her family moved to an island on Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse when she was two years old.¹⁰¹ When she was six she went to the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse where she stayed for seven years.

While Jim strummed on his guitar in the background, occasionally interjecting and clarifying, Leonie shared her pictures from her trip to Montreal. She explained that she journeyed to St. Joseph's Oratory for healing. Leonie had wanted to visit before she was sick, when her mom was still alive. She explained, "My mom was in the convent here too when she was young and they were taught French so all this they spoke was French. So she used to order these books and she would tell us what it's about. Plus there's other books too, I have one about Brother Andre, how he became a saint."¹⁰² Leonie's motivations for going to St. Joseph related to her cancer, but also memories of her mother's books about Brother Andre. When I asked her if she thought the trip helped her with her illness, she responded:

Mhmm yeah. If you really believe in your faith and I felt, I felt a change somehow. But because before I had, they had to lift me out to get in and out of the chair, now I can do it on my own. And when they told me that I was, I was in this where it stopped growing but they can't say for sure how long and whether if it comes back whether to have chemo again and then radiation.¹⁰³

This type of healing parallels other community stories discussed earlier, where praying to Father Moraud and having faith in him was necessary for healing.

Leonie later shared that she had been on other trips, including one to Guadalupe with other ladies from Ile-a-la-Crosse. She shared her observations of Mexicans praying to Our Lady

⁹⁹ Leonie's parents were Francois and Flavie Desjarlais. Ovide Desjarlais is Leonie's older brother.

¹⁰⁰ Leonie and Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012.

¹⁰¹ Island behind Big Island

¹⁰² Leonie and Jim Durocher, 16 October 2012.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

of Guadalupe, noting that some walked on their knees to get there and they sure prayed hard. At her husband's encouragement she shared humorous stories of driving to the Edmonton Airport and of her experiences in Mexico. She laughed as she described herself and one other woman waking up at the place where they were staying and thinking they saw the Virgin Mary. The women dropped to their knees and started praying until Marie-Adelle came in with her glasses and told them they were praying to a Coca-Cola sign out the window. Jim chimed in for this story, suggesting it one that it is one of the family's favorites to share.¹⁰⁴ Other stories included searching for a bottle of tequila to bring back to her husband as a souvenir. In this way, going to see Our Lady of Guadalupe is about more than just pilgrimage, it is also a holiday.¹⁰⁵ Leonie's account positioned her and the other women she was with as comical fish out of water, experiencing a different place with friends. Quite a few individuals from Ile-a-la-Crosse have travelled to places like Guadalupe, Fatima, Lourdes's and the Vatican.¹⁰⁶ Like Ovide Wolverine's description of going to Lac Ste. Anne, the holiday aspects tend to be significant in narratives of visiting pilgrimage sites around the world. The trips are not just about prayer or healing, but also about friendships and seeing other places, suggesting complex and coexisting motivations for pilgrimaging beyond being Catholic or Indigenous. Leonie passed away on July 16th 2014.

This chapter has considered the continuing significance of Catholicism for Indigenous peoples in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak since the movement in the early 1970s for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Some people associate the takeover with creating a separation between the community and the Catholic Church. By considering the continuing faith and role of the Church in Ile-a-la-Crosse during and after the movement for local control, I have demonstrated how Catholicism continued to be meaningful to some community members and the range of ways that it was negotiated by individuals and families, often depending on personal life histories and experiences with the Church. While the movement for local control over education during the early 1970s was recognized as a significant event in terms of the community's relationship with the Church, those who attended church and belonged to the Catholic community prior to the takeover continued to identify as Catholic. This event and the faith of local people, rather than broader changes within the Catholic Church resulting from the second Vatican Council are

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ See for example, Barb Flett, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 24 October 2014; Marie Adele Daigneault, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, August 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; Georgina Morin, 8 August 2006.

understood within local historical consciousness as essential to the shifting roles of the Church within northwestern Saskatchewan. Experiences at residential schools as well as socioeconomic conditions and family circumstances have shaped the various ways that those I interviewed related to the Church. To some, abuse at residential schools and an understanding of the Church's role in northern colonialism led them to move away from the Church. For others, the Church continued to be a significant part of their faith and at times healing. Still others have negotiated Catholicism and Indigeneity in a variety of ways. The 1970s brought additional changes to the Church with the application of Vatican II and the public resurgence of Indigenous spirituality like the sweat lodge. Here again, some in the community rejected the sweat lodges because of their understandings of Catholicism, while others embraced sweats, and still others practiced a combination of the two. Finally, I turned to considering the Blessed Virgin Mary in the community, in particular Marian shrines, appearances, and pilgrimages. Intercessory prayers to Mary have been a way that some community members continue to try and decolonize their communities, both by praying for themselves and praying for others. For others, Mary is significant because of memories of parents and grandparents, and in this way shrines and pilgrimages are often used to uphold family and community traditions.

The 1970s brought global changes to the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II. In northwestern Saskatchewan a shift from the time of Father Moraud to an era of more open conversations, critiques, and negotiations around the role of Catholicism in the colonizing and decolonizing processes tends to be understood as the result of local agency. A range of local approaches to religion and spirituality have come to characterize communities that still predominantly identify as Catholic, while Elders like Jacob express concern about declining faith. The conflict over the school and over public sweat lodges brought a tendency for some to equate 'hardliner' Catholics with an uncritical acceptance of the Church and colonialism. The notion of being pro-local control or pro-Church was espoused by both the Metis Society and the Church itself, and is one that has been reflected more recently by community members. My conversations with local people suggest more complicated relationships between Indigeneity and Catholicism that are entangled with family traditions, healing, and sincere faith, even with demonstrable awareness of the colonial and genocidal aspects of the Church. Many whom I have worked with have had more ambiguous relationships with their faith than a simple dichotomy between Catholic and Indigenous, or hardliners and radicals would allow us to understand. The following

section picks up this theme of negotiating Catholicism in considering the significance of Residential Schools and more particularly the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse Residential School from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement on local historical consciousness. I argue that, just as there has been little room in the literature to consider Catholic faith amidst decolonization, the processes of reconciliation in Canada have not properly considered the complex relationships between Indigenous people in the north and Catholicism.

Chapter Eight: Reconciliation and Exclusion

“I wanted to tell my stories and failures but didn’t find anyone to tell them to. They burned deep in my soul. My sister and I still remember pieces of our experiences, but we did not sit long enough to complete our stories.”¹

-Antoinette Caisse Lafleur

“I don’t think it [the apology] will ever really be accepted, in terms of the people who attended here, in terms of that it won’t have as much meaning until the government says we will include Ile-a-la-Crosse, we will recognize that the abuse and experiences that the students went through here are also part of the abuse that happened everywhere.”²

-Duane Favel

What happens when a community is excluded³ from larger processes and narratives of reconciliation,⁴ and consequently, when survivors of genocide are not given the chance to develop or share their stories? The first quotation, taken from the testimony of Antoinette Caisse Lafleur from Beauval, demonstrates efforts to forget traumatic personal experiences of attending the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse,⁵ as well as the challenge of telling *pieces of experiences*, or crafting a narrative, in the absence of a listener.⁶ The second quotation connects the local acceptance (or non-acceptance) of government apologies and reconciliation directly with official recognition. In northwestern Saskatchewan, Metis, Dene and Cree children attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from 1860-1973, a school that was omitted from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) negotiated in 2005 between the federal government, Churches and First Nations leaders (announced in 2006, and implemented in 2007), and more recently excluded from the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

¹ Antoinette Caisse Lafleur, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

² Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014.

³ My use of the term excluded echoes the understandings of Survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse School. Technically, the school does not meet the criteria for schools to be recognized as laid out in the Settlement Agreement, an agreement that did not include Metis political representatives in the negotiating parties.

⁴ Throughout this chapter my references to reconciliation and the reconciliation process focus on the various components of the Settlement Agreement in general, and the TRC in particular because I have found that the TRC (as well as its recommendations and final reports) have become the focal point for discussions about reconciliation in Canada.

⁵ I have chosen to refer to the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse as a residential school rather than a “boarding school” as part of my own effort to recognize that it was part of the residential school system. Although many in the community continue to refer to the school as the “boarding school,” or “the convent,” others have argued it is important to use the term residential school. At the first meeting with a representative of the federal government on September 8th 2016 in Ile-a-la-Crosse about the school, the agenda used the term residential school. See for example, Louis Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁶ Lafleur, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

Canada (TRC).⁷ The dismissal of student experiences at the Ile-a-la-Crosse school is particularly apparent in *Volume Three* of the TRC's Final Report that continues to racialize Metis peoples as "mixed." For survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school, this exclusion has made Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 apology in the House of Commons for the federal government's role in Canadian residential schools hollow. The historical consciousness among survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school has come to reflect this sense of exclusion.

In some ways this chapter sits uncomfortably with the ways I have discussed the complex negotiation of Catholicism in previous chapters. However, to many community members the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Settlement Agreement and reconciliation processes sits uncomfortably with their historical consciousness of Catholicism in northwest Saskatchewan. The exclusion of the school was one of the most meaningful aspects of my doctoral research to some of the community members with whom I have worked. Over a decade since the Settlement Agreement, survivors and political leaders have continued to advocate for the inclusion of their school. On September 8th 2016, they testified in front of the Minister of Indigenous Affairs Carolyn Bennett at a meeting about the excluded school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. At the writing of this chapter, the results of the meeting have yet to be determined. This chapter is not intended to forecast the results of that meeting, but rather to consider how individuals presented their personal stories and broader history within the context of a public meeting with a federal official to seek recognition for their school, revealing how within this context they continue to negotiate Indigeneity and Catholicism. Exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRSSA and the more recent, lacking efforts at reconciliation by the TRC in this region demonstrates the consequences of Indian status and treaty status in the north, the colonial political and social power of the Catholic Church throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and suggest how racialized narratives of mixedness incorporate Indigenous Catholic communities.

Earlier chapters have noted how attendance at residential schools in Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse profoundly affected recent historical consciousness about Catholicism in Ile-a-la-Crosse

⁷ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a component of the IRSSA. A commission was first appointed in 2008. A new commission lead by Justice Murray Sinclair was appointed in 2009. Sinclair and Commissioners Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson, gathered 6,750 statements from across the country at various regional and community events including eight national events. The final event, and release of the Summary Report and Calls to Action took place in June 2015 in Ottawa. The six volume final report of the commission was published in November 2015.

and Patuanak. This chapter picks up the discussion of the varying ways that Indigeneity and Catholicism have and continue to be negotiated, while shifting to more specifically consider the stories of survivors who attended an excluded school. These survivors came from Catholic Indigenous communities throughout the northwest, and today could be seen as comprising a new community that is apart from the broader Canadian community of Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors. The community of survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school has not had the same opportunities to share their stories or to have their experiences recognized, even though they see their experiences of being separated from families and cultures, poor living conditions, and abuse equivalent to those of family, friends, and neighbors who attended the recognized school at Beauval. Survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school share memories of their experiences at the school as well as the school's exclusion from the IRSSA, but vary in terms of their current relationships with the Catholic Church. For some Catholicism is a significant part of their faith, others have moved away from the Church because of their experiences at the school, and still others struggle to negotiate their Catholic faith with the ways that they and their families were treated at the school.

This chapter explores competing narratives of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse; the national narrative that has to date excluded the school, the racialized narrative of so-called "Metis schools," and more importantly, how survivors themselves, who identify as Cree, Metis, and Dene, mobilize their histories and individual testimony in their calls for redress. The public testimonies by political leadership and survivors serve as the primary sources for this chapter, and are used to demonstrate how omission has affected the historical consciousness of the school and reconciliation in the region, and as a counter to the existing national narrative that I argue excludes the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse because of a continuing tendency to racialize those labeled as Metis as mixed (thereby including European Christian heritage and culture) and therefore to dismiss their experiences as less than those labeled as First Nations who attended recognized schools. This emphasis on mixedness extends to how the Catholic faith of Metis students is interpreted and at times used to dismiss Metis claims, and is especially stark given the absence of discussions of mixedness or Christian faiths in reference to students attending recognized schools.⁸ I maintain that a deeper engagement with the Catholic histories of Indigenous

⁸ Most recently evident in *Volume Three* of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience : The Final*

communities in northwestern Saskatchewan as well as the varying ways that community members continue to negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity is needed in efforts at reconciliation, and the scholarship on that process, to more fully understand local Indigenous experiences at residential schools beyond a simple dichotomy that treats Catholicism as antithetical to Indigeneity.

Secondly, this chapter considers how trauma and historical consciousness intersect when individuals publicly come forward to share their stories. Stories in this context are recognized as powerful and even sacred,⁹ as this particular group of survivors has not had the same opportunities to share their stories that other residential school survivors across the country have in the TRC events and through the Independent Assessment Process (IAP). For survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, not being able to share their stories, and at times associated feelings that their stories are not believed or seen on par with survivors of other schools, becomes part of their local historical consciousness of marginalization. Even as national historical consciousness and historiography have shifted, beginning with the apologies of the Churches in the late 1980s and the early 1990s when Phil Fontaine publicly came forward to share his personal story of being abused at residential school and culminating in the final report of the TRC in 2015, the Ile-a-la-Crosse school and the stories of survivors who attended that school have been excluded.¹⁰ This results in Canadians having an incomplete understanding of the limits of the IRSSA and efforts at reconciliation in this country.

The focus of this dissertation is not simply on Indian Residential Schools or the experiences of residential school survivors, though it became apparent that experiences in the schools at Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval (BIRS), and the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse has significantly affected local historical consciousness relating to the deeper history of the Church and Catholicism in the region. In 2006, when I first conducted research in Ile-a-la-Crosse regarding appearances of the Virgin Mary the narratives of Catholicism I heard differed from those that became apparent during community meetings and subsequent research in 2010. The apology in 2008 was referenced as not applying to Ile-a-la-Crosse and debates in the community

Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 3 (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

⁹ Marie Favel, "Opening Prayer," Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

¹⁰ Clément Chartier, "Open Letter To Truth And Reconciliation Commission Chief Commissioner Murray Sinclair," Posted 12 June 2015. Accessed, 15 June 2015, <http://Desjarlais.metisnation.ca/index.php/news/open-letter-to-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-chief-commissioner-murray-sinclair>.

about legal action for recognition rekindled earlier conflicts associated with going against the Church in the 1970s. The exclusion of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse affects the entire region as individuals from all northwestern communities attended the school. During my time in Ile-a-la-Crosse, I have found that the exclusion from the IRSSA has become a significant part of the stories people tell about Catholicism in their community. Like the earlier school takeover (discussed in chapters six and seven) this issue has also become a point for disagreement, with some people advocating taking the Church to court and others concerned about possible divisions that could cause within their community.¹¹ Beyond this, there are some Elders within both Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak who because of their own earlier experiences and faith in the integrity of the clergy do not believe others' stories of abuse in residential schools.¹² These variations reflect the power of the Church during the middle of the twentieth century and differing local views about Catholicism where some community members see their Elders equating faith with deference to Church authority. Furthermore, various socio-economic positions at times affected how individuals interpret their time at residential school within their life histories.

I make an effort to hold space for the stories of survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school as I document the exclusion of that school from the IRSSA, the apology in the House of Commons, and the work of the TRC. I do not outline or repeat government excuses for omitting the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, but rather focus on local narratives and historical consciousness that in their call for recognition work to complicate our understandings of the reconciliation process in Canada to date so as to reveal the need for more nuanced considerations of the Catholicism of Indigenous communities, in order to challenge dichotomies present within the work of the TRC and other scholarship that equates Catholicism or Christianity historically as anti-Indigenous. Such studies leave little space for either the sincere faith of Catholic Indigenous people or for understanding conflicts that occurred within historically Catholic communities as a result of the genocidal nature of the residential school system. In effect, taking the historical Catholic faith prevalent in these communities seriously leads to a more nuanced understanding of the harms of the residential schools. I begin with a discussion of my methodologies that are unique to the form

¹¹ Rod Nickel, *StarPhoenix* (Saskatoon, Sask) 25 Mar 2008: A.5.; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes, March 2010; Ovide and Irene Desjarlais, Personal Communication, November 2010.

¹² For example, Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D'Jonai, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013; Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014; Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014; "Frances Aubichon," *Voice of the Elders*, Compiled by Marlene Millar (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, 2006), p. 91; Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

of testimony considered in this chapter, before analyzing the current national narrative of reconciliation apparent in the final report of the TRC that excludes the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse and contrasting that narrative with those outlined by local political leaders for the recognition of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, and the testimony of survivors. Local narratives of the school include how being excluded from the IRSSA has affected communities and individuals, and oppose the official narratives of residential schools that are based primarily on officially recognized schools. Survivors challenge the official narrative by outlining their understandings of the federal government's involvement in the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse and by incorporating aspects of the current national narrative to note similarities between their experiences and those of students who attended recognized schools. These narratives put forth by community leaders and survivors confirm what I have argued earlier about the complex role of the Catholic Church and its priests as both agents of colonialism and providers of relief and social welfare culminating in the combined spiritual and political power of the Catholic Church – components that are absent from the existing narrative of residential schools evident in the final reports of the TRC.

Earlier chapters of this dissertation have primarily been based on interviews I conducted. As I noted in the introduction, I attempted to build relationships with community members, but these have varied, and only with some individuals have I started to approach what might be considered sustained conversations.¹³ Furthermore, I have attempted to more holistically consider local encounters with the Catholic Church across the twentieth century, helping to situate and contextualize the particular experiences of individuals in the heretofore-unrecognized residential school at Ile-a-la-Crosse. In this chapter then, there is merit in shifting from a focus on oral histories I have co-created with some community members, to considering the public testimony of a range of survivors at their first meeting with a representative of the federal government. From the interviews I conducted and time in Ile-a-la-Crosse and English River, I became aware of the significance of the exclusion for individual and community historical consciousness, and my earlier interviews and engagement helped me to interpret the testimony I heard on September 8th 2016. While it is certainly a worthy goal to move beyond testimony at

¹³ For discussions of the importance of “sustained conversations” in oral history and ethnohistory see oral historian Henry Greenspan, “Afterword,” in Steven High ed., *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), p. 351. In a different context, historian Keith Carlson has emphasized the need for ethnohistorians to engage in sustained conversations with the Indigenous communities and interlocutors that they work with. See Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

some point, as oral historians like Henry Greenspan have called for, at the current time, public testimony by survivors is a place to start considering these neglected stories.¹⁴

I asked most of those I interviewed about the apology and the exclusion of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the IRSSA. However, I did not ask detailed questions about individual experiences in the school, or about neglect or abuse. Some of the people I interviewed seemed to want to speak about their time at the school, and when this was the case I let them share. Others were clear it was a topic they did not want to talk about, though they often acknowledged the importance of researching the residential school at Ile-a-la-Crosse and its exclusion from the IRSSA. Because I structured my project around Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, my research agreements were specifically with those communities and limited me to interviewing individuals in Ile-a-la-Crosse and English River, rather than throughout northwestern Saskatchewan.¹⁵ Public testimony shared by seventeen survivors at the meeting with the Minister on September 8th has enabled me to incorporate broader regional perspectives, necessary since survivors of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse came from around the northwest, from La Loche to Pinehouse, and currently reside in communities across the province and beyond. To only interview individuals who have spent their entire lives in and near Ile-a-la-Crosse would not allow for the necessary regional focus needed to understand the history of the school. Beyond this, focusing on public testimony restricts consideration to only those things that individuals elected to share publicly about their story. This chapter is concerned with competing public narratives of the school so the testimony offered by political leaders and survivors are the main sources.

The public context of the recountings by survivors of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse before Minister Bennett, as well as the potential political and legal ramifications of sharing their stories with the hope of having the school recognized by the federal government, led me to use the term testimony. Additionally, several survivors referred to their accounts as testimony.¹⁶ I see their testimony as being shaped by their historical consciousness, experiences of exclusion, and efforts

¹⁴ Henry Greenspan, "From Testimony to Recounting: Reflections from Forty Years of Listening to Holocaust Survivors" in Steven High ed., *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

¹⁵ Working with more than two Indigenous communities, and establishing relationships with those communities was beyond the scope of this doctoral project.

¹⁶ Renowned oral historian Henry Greenspan has suggested that the term testimony is too specific to be a foundational concept for those who work with survivors of genocide, because of the legal aspects of providing testimony and the requirement to provide as definitive an account as possible of what a witness has witnessed. To Greenspan, this particular form of survivors' recounting is rare. Greenspan, "From Testimony to Recounting."

to convince the Minister to recognize their school. These were certainly not definitive accounts, and were limited by time and the public nature of the accounts. However, survivors also spoke to each other – an audience that was primarily made up of fellow survivors and family members. Several referred back to earlier testimonies and echoed what other survivors had said. This resulted in the ability for speakers to make references to common experiences in more general ways, as well as the likelihood that an outsider such as myself would understand their narratives differently than their fellow survivors. A community of survivors of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse cuts across cultural and community boundaries that in other instances have been divisive.

Greenspan has cautioned scholars about assuming survivor retellings are narratives or stories.¹⁷ Rather, he suggests they are attempts to organize one's experiences into a narrative format in an effort to communicate with those who have not experienced genocide. These points are worthy of reflection in this context where several survivors were often attempting to publicly share their experiences for the first time, and struggled to fit their experiences into a narrative form. Here, part of survivors' historical consciousness is having not had the opportunity to share or possibly even formulate their stories. Hesitations, silences, and general references, as well as visible emotion offered glimpses of this struggle for some speakers. Others had clearly crafted parts of their narratives before. However, we must consider how they may have compromised in their retellings to make their experiences understandable, or to convince the Minister to recognize their claims. Rather than an internal processing of experiences, or historical consciousness, their testimony is an effort to communicate these experiences to an outside audience. So while aspects of their historical consciousness and interpretations of the past were apparent, there were likely components that they chose not to share in such a particular, politically charged, public context.

The findings and reports of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenge Canadian historiography to acknowledge Canadian residential school policies and practices as acts of cultural genocide.¹⁸ The first two-part volume of the final report provides a general

¹⁷ Greenspan, "Afterword," p. 353.

¹⁸ See for example the foundational works J.R. Miller and John Milloy. J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). More recently scholars such as Ian Mosby have drawn attention to the violence at schools in the form of experiments that were conducted on students, see Ian Mosby, "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952" *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XLVI, No. 91 (Mai/May 2013), pp. 615-642. There is a growing body of scholarship on the apology and reconciliation in Canada. See for example, J.R. Miller, "Dealing with Residential School Survivors: Reconciliation in International Perspective," *Australasian Canadian Studies*, 26, no. 1 (2008); J.R. Miller, "'We Are

history of the included schools using a range of historical sources, including government correspondence, reports about the schools as well as testimony by survivors to detail the poor conditions of the schools that were seen as problematic historically, rather than projecting modern values and ideals onto the past. Historical sources are contextualized and contribute to a forceful argument regarding the truth of Canadian Residential Schools – that they were in effect cultural genocide.¹⁹ Like the Prime Minister’s apology, the positive experiences of some students do not match or make up for the significant harms. Beyond the contributions to historiography, the work of the TRC at its public events and through its publications has started to raise awareness about the history of residential schooling more broadly and to shift the public national narrative of this history to one that acknowledges the systemic underfunding, negligence, and abuse that took place. The apology and work of the TRC has created a different context for discussing residential schools.²⁰

There have certainly been limits to this new narrative of residential schools – it tends to focus on events in the more distant past rather than residential schools that operated until at least 1998. Even timelines by the TRC and subsequently the National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NRCTR) are opaque on details such as when the last school closed.²¹ The sheer volume of sources and materials that commissioners, various unidentified researchers, and now the NRCTR staff have attempted to bring together in a relatively short amount of time makes it

Sorry’ The Canadian Government Apology for Residential Schooling,” *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society*, 46, no. 2 (spring 2009); Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

¹⁹ See for example, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015); The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools. The History Part 1 Origins to 1939 The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 1, Part 1* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015); The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools. The History Part 2 1939-2000 The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 1, part 2* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Oral Historians have devoted attention to the relationship between national consciousness and the stories individuals are able to tell. See for example, Alistair Thomson, “Anzac Memories.” In Robert and Alistair Thomson eds, *The Oral History Reader, 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Pp. 244-254.

²¹ National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, “Residential Schools Timeline,” <http://nctr.ca/exhibitions.php> (Accessed November 2016); Phil Fontaine, Amy Craft, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

not surprising that errors and limits to the work can be found.²² Other errors include saying the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse was run by the United Church, rather than the oblates. These errors are seemingly small, but when the continued exclusion of the school from the settlement and current efforts at reconciliation are considered, they become significant. Timelines provided by the NRCTR and in *A Knock on the Door*, acknowledge the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse as one of first residential schools established in western Canada, enabling them to establish a longer history of residential schools in Canada. However, it is later noted that the school became known as Beauval- an inaccuracy that erases the continued existence of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse.²³ Most relevant to this dissertation, and in particular this chapter is the limited and problematic treatment that excluded schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse receive in both the work of the TRC and their subsequent reports.

Those who attended unrecognized schools were increasingly excluded from the TRC and the commission's national events. As a result, these excluded groups make little more than a token showing in the TRC reports. Even though Commissioner Littlechild came to Ile-a-la-Crosse to hear stories, the larger national events made increasingly less space for the Metis or excluded schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse.²⁴ The final event in Ottawa in June 2015 did not include representation from the Métis National Council (MNC), nor was there any acknowledgement of the exclusion of what were considered predominantly Metis Schools from the Settlement Agreement. In a media release by the Métis National Council in response to the final Truth and

²² Much of the research used in the Common Experience and Independent Assessment Process was transferred to the TRC and has since become the basis for the new National Research Center for Truth and Reconciliation. This has meant that the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse has continued to be excluded, and decisions made in the original government research for compensation processes that only included recognized schools have been perpetuated. The recognized IRS at Beauval and the unrecognized school at Ile-a-la-Crosse are conflated on the NRCTR webpage and in a recent publication by U of M Press. Phil Fontaine, Amy Craft, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door*, pp xiv, xix, xx.

²³ Because of frequent closings and re-openings it is difficult to provide a comprehensive timeline of the schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval. The school in Ile-a-la-Crosse opened in 1860. In 1897 that school officially received federal funding as an Indian Residential School. That school closed in 1905, and a new school opened at La Plonge near Beauval in 1906, becoming the federally funded Beauval Indian Residential School. However, that was not the end of a residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, as a new school was built there in 1912/1913. The residence in Ile-a-la-Crosse was officially closed in 1976 when the Church transferred control of the school to the local school authority. Beauval Indian Residential School was transferred to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in 1983, and ceased to operate in 1995. I provide a detailed a more detailed timeline in the introductory chapter.

²⁴ Clément Chartier, Open Letter To Truth And Reconciliation Commission Chief Commissioner Murray Sinclair, Posted 12 June 2015. Accessed, 15 June 2015 < <http://Desjarlais.metisnation.ca/index.php/news/open-letter-to-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-chief-commissioner-murray-sinclair>>.

Reconciliation Commission event and release of the Summary Report, President Clément Chartier stated:

I was gravely disappointed in the total absence of any meaningful or corrective recommendations in your report for dealing with the vast majority of the citizens of the Métis Nation who attended Métis specific residential/boarding schools operating under the same assimilationist policies, or cultural genocide as you concluded, and were excluded from the IRSSA and the apology by the Prime Minister.²⁵

A few months later, in the fall of 2015 the final report included a slim volume about Metis experiences, *Volume Three The Metis Experience*. Although chapter four is on Ile-a-la Crosse, it solely focuses on the history of the mission and makes no mention specifically of the exclusion of the school there from the Settlement Agreement.²⁶

Volume Three of the Final Report of the TRC, *The Metis Experience*, is slender compared to the two-part *Volume One*. It is unclear who conducted the research for this report or who specifically the author was. Due to a problematic definition of Metis as mixed and equating Metis with non-status people, the author of the report does not appear to be up to date on Metis historiography. Furthermore, an uncritical reliance on previously published materials, without properly contextualizing the time periods or circumstances in which those sources were published as well as a failure to incorporate published responses by the MNC and survivors of excluded schools suggests that the author was not a specialist in Indigenous history more generally. Given that there was no mention of the Metis or excluded schools in the summary of the final report released by the TRC in June of 2015, the third volume released in November of that year appears to have been hastily researched and added. While it is significant that the published report acknowledges Metis experiences, and that two of the calls to action relate to recognizing Metis experiences, the report itself continues to exclude the stories and experiences of those who attended unrecognized schools, and draws upon older, racialized narratives of mixedness that dismiss Metis experience. Although in *Volume One*, the TRC has pushed the historiography to recognize residential schools as cultural genocide, *Volume Three* is based on a more dated historiographical understanding of the Metis and celebratory mission history.

The racialization of Metis peoples is evident in the definition of Metis at the beginning of volume three when the author states:

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*.

For the sake of clarity, this chapter generally uses the term *Métis* to describe people of mixed descent who were not able, or chose not, to be registered as Indians under the *Indian Act*. It should be recognized that not all the people described by this term would have identified themselves as Métis during their lives, and that the histories of these people varied considerably, depending on time and location.²⁷

This conflation of Metis with mixedness as well as Metis with anyone not recognized as Indians under the Indian Acts exemplifies the continuing racialization of Metis as mixed and implicit dismissal of Metis as less authentic because of this mixedness. Here I build on sociologist and Metis studies scholar Chris Andersen's demonstration that the preoccupation with Metis as mixed comes from older notions of race that continue to be reinforced by our legal and political systems.²⁸ I suggest that colonial understandings of racial mixing can be pushed further to reveal how they ahistorically include views that dichotomize Indigenous and Christian and therefore equate Indigenous Christianity with mixedness. *Volume Three* problematically includes the experiences of the above-defined Metis students who attended both recognized and unrecognized schools. Indeed, framing the issue around Metis experiences enables the authors of the volume to devote little attention to the issue of unrecognized schools. Metisness, defined by mixedness serves to dismiss and diminish the experiences of survivors of Metis, Cree, and Dene ancestry who attended unrecognized schools like that at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

In *Volume Three*, the Christian faith of several survivors is referenced without context, and often in ways that are not connected to their experiences at residential schools or the assimilative program, neglect, and abuse that occurred there. I read this emphasis on Christianity as related to the emphasis on Metis as "mixed." References to the Catholicism or Christianity of Metis students depicts experiences of these survivors as less-than those who attended recognized schools or who are not racialized as Metis. For example, it is noted that Maria Campbell's family were "churchgoers." Presented in this way, without context or interpretation, affiliation with and participation in Christian faith actually serves to delegitimize Indigenous agency as Christians and victimization in the schools. As demonstrated in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, in northwestern Saskatchewan many Indigenous people were "churchgoers"—this was not unique to Metis people, although there has been an increasing division within communities between

²⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

²⁸ Chris Andersen, "*Métis*": *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2014).

younger generations and those that they perceive as “hardcore” Catholics, in part because of experiences at residential schools.

In terms of understanding the experiences of those who attended the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, *Volume Three* does not explain the role of the Catholic Church as a political power and agent of colonialism in the provincial north. The volume therefore fails to adequately describe, contextualize, or critique the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Settlement Agreement and from the extant truth and reconciliation process led by the TRC.²⁹ Rather than advocating for the recognition of schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse, or detailing the consequences of their exclusion from the IRSSA, *Volume Three* repeats government justifications and excuses for excluding “Metis schools” that result in Metis experiences and narratives continuing to be dismissed.

Although the report vaguely acknowledges that Metis students experienced the same policies as other Indigenous students, with the exception of a few pages, the report focuses on what makes these experiences different.³⁰ The focus on difference serves to undercut the similarities between student experiences at recognized and unrecognized schools, and dismiss “Metis” experiences as not as severe as First Nations experiences. This dismissal is evident by an emphasis on “Metis” involvement in the running of the schools and an equal weight being given to positive and negative experiences. Beyond this, the depiction of being involved in the schools and having positive experiences as unique to the “Metis” experience is problematic. Examples provided of Metis people working in the schools are more extensive than the description of similar experiences of neglect, abuse, unsanitary conditions, heavy workloads etc. Furthermore, the report does not use the same language to describe experiences of negligence and abuse as *Volume One*. The result is the implication that “Metis” students did not have the same harsh experiences as First Nations students. *Volume Three*’s racialized narrative shows the limits of reconciliation efforts in Canada. Although the narratives offered in *Volume Three* are not difficult to critique using recent academic scholarship as well as accounts from survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse School, academic scholarship and survivor stories are not readily accessible to all who might read *Volume Three* that has the authority of the TRC behind it. It is in the wake of

²⁹ I have chosen to equate the work of TRC with reconciliation in Canada because of the power of that commission in leading conversations about reconciliation, often at the continued exclusion of the Metis.

³⁰ For places where the report notes similarities between “Metis” and First Nations experience see, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*, pp. 45, 55.

powerful, public narratives of reconciliation that survivors of Ile-a-la-Crosse continue to advocate for their experiences to be recognized.

Volume Three is primarily based on evidence gathered for the Comprehensive and IAP Claims process by government agencies as well as materials gathered by the TRC. Since these processes only included schools recognized by the Settlement Agreement, this is a faulty evidence basis for accessing the experiences of students who attended unrecognized schools.³¹ The report also draws on a variety of previously published and online sources, and does so without contextualization or efforts to situate them in a rapidly evolving historiography. As such, there is no recognition in the volume that stories of attending schools published in the late 1960s or 1970s might not contain accounts of neglect and abuse for a variety of reasons, including the shifting national consciousness and narrative discussed above. This is most apparent in the chapter on student lives that focuses on previously published memoirs by students defined by the report as Metis that includes people of mixed ancestry and without Indian status. Three individuals and their memoirs are the focus of this chapter --Madeline Bird, Maria Campbell and James Gladstone. In addition to the problems with how Metis is defined, and issues around not situating evidence, the almost nostalgic “school days” tone of the chapter is problematic, especially in how it differs from the tone of the preceding volumes. For example, Madeline Bird’s experiences are shared in the following way: “While her memoirs often describe the nuns and priests of Fort Chipewyan as being strict, her overall assessment was one of gratitude and understanding.”³² However, the facts that Madeline Bird was born in 1899, and that her memoir was published with the assistance of Sister Agnes Sutherland provide essential context for understanding her narrative. Using Madeline Bird’s particular account as one of three to represent “Metis” student experiences replicates an older narrative of benevolence in making sense of all Metis experiences.

³¹ Volume Three included two statements made before the TRC by individuals who attended the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse: TRC, AVS, Robert Derocher, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 21 June 2012, Statement Number: 2011-4380. TRC, AVS, Allen Morin, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Batoche, Saskatchewan, 19 July 2010, Statement Number: 01-SK-18-25JY10-002. See Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*, pp. 46, 48, 49.

³² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. p 8. In chapters four and five I have discussed how Elders I have work with use the term “strict” as a catch all for the more authoritarian aspects of the Church, and a way to discuss the colonial aspects of their history with a white settler-Canadian historian.

The conclusion of *Volume Three* contains the only notation that Metis experiences have yet to be recognized, noting, “The harm done to the children, their parents, and the Métis community was substantial. It is an ongoing shame that this damage has not been addressed.”³³ The conclusion then lists the two relevant TRC Calls to Action that relate to these excluded schools, numbers twenty-nine and part of number forty-six. Number twenty-nine calls “upon the parties and, in particular, the federal government, to work collaboratively with plaintiffs not included in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to have disputed legal issues determined expeditiously on an agreed upon set of facts.”³⁴ Yet, chapter four on Ile-a-la-Crosse makes no mention of the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the Settlement Agreement, or the vocal contemporary struggles of former students for recognition that are evident in newspaper articles, public meetings, court cases, as well as press releases and postings by the MNC. Rather, the Ile-a-la-Crosse chapter reads like a celebratory mission history that neglects recent scholarship on missions and residential schools. The chapter draws heavily on Timothy Foran’s recent doctoral dissertation, but unlike Foran does not make it clear that the work is from the perspective of missionaries or incorporate Foran’s scholarly arguments about how missionary definitions of the term Metis shifted during the second half of the nineteenth century in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Foran’s scholarship is instead mined for quotes and descriptions of the early history of the mission and the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse.³⁵

The narrative that is provided in the chapter on Ile-a-la-Crosse is worth devoting some time to, as it offers a recent example of what those who are seeking to have the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse acknowledged are working to challenge. The fact that this narrative of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse was published in 2015 as part of the TRC final report showcases the prevailing nature of equating Metis history with mission history, and with viewing Indigenous Christianity as negating the realities of colonialism. After outlining the establishment of the mission in 1846 and the development from a day school in 1847 to a boarding school in 1860 run by Sisters of Charity, the chapter turns to uncritically describing the school during the late nineteenth century based on missionary sources, and often incorporating the missionary values applied to their work,

³³ Ibid, p. 55

³⁴ A sub-point of call number forty-six was to enable those excluded from the Settlement Agreement to sign onto the Covenant of Reconciliation. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. pp. 55-56.

³⁵ Timothy Foran, “‘Les Gens De Cette Place’: Oblates And The Evolving Concept Of *Métis* At Ile-À-La-Crosse, 1845-1898,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2011).

in terms of successes and challenges.³⁶

The only references to student experiences included in this chapter are those of Therese Arcand quoted from the 1976 Ile-a-la-Crosse bicentennial community history book.³⁷ Arcand's account is not contextualized, and follows a "school days" style of narrative, typical of local history books in the 1970s and 1980s, which focuses on chores and the work they had to do.³⁸ Like Madeline Bird's account from a previous chapter, there is considerable emphasis on the benevolence of the schools and positive experiences. Again, as the only example in the chapter of student experiences of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, this narrative from the mid-nineteen seventies being taken as representative of student experiences despite more recent accounts serves to support a narrative of Metis as mixed that highlights their Catholic Faith and more positive experiences. The remainder of the chapter outlines the shift to provincial funding for the school, making no mention of family allowance payments or other forms of federal involvement. From here, the chapter jumps ahead to when "local parents were demanding greater control over education in the community. As a result, the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school was closed and replaced by the locally administered Rossignol elementary and Rossignol high schools."³⁹ Missing in this brief reference to the school take over is a discussion of the conditions in the school and general colonialism in the community that led individuals to demand for local control as well as some of the challenges and conflicts that were part of that movement.⁴⁰

Chapter seven, "The Student's Speak," near the end of *Volume Three* contains more recent accounts of Metis student experiences from across Canada combined with older narratives. This chapter is a slight improvement over the depictions of student experiences in earlier chapters that are based on previously published accounts of four students, but is not as strong in its depiction of student experiences as the earlier volumes of the *Final Report*. The author notes that Metis students often experienced, "a sharp and often tragic break from their family; a bewildering immersion in a foreign and highly regimented culture; harsh discipline; vulnerability to abuse; an educational regime that placed more focus on religion and work than on academics; and a

³⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. p. 31.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ More nostalgic narratives of "school days" were apparent in some of my own interviews. In particular see, Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 October 2012.

³⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. p. 33.

⁴⁰ See chapters six and seven for my discussion of the movement for local control in Ile-a-la-Crosse.

limited, monotonous, and unappealing diet.”⁴¹ However, this depiction is immediately followed by noting, “Some recall kind teachers, and are grateful for the skills that they acquired. For others, the only positive memories are of the friendships and alliances they formed in response to what they perceived as harsh and sometimes abusive discipline and mistreatment at the hands of school bullies.”⁴² For the “mixed” Metis people, we are provided with a much softer interpretation of the IRS system than is offered in the earlier volumes of the TRC’s final report describing those that attended recognized “First Nations” schools.⁴³ The emphasis on gratitude, skills, and friendships, and dismissal of abuse by adding the qualifying terms “what they perceived as,” and depicting mistreatment by other students as bullying rather than physical and sexual abuse or assault that occurred because of negligence by school staff.

Buried within the chapter are two paragraphs that outline physical and sexual abuse experienced by students who attended the Ile-a-la-Crosse School. Rather than focusing on these experiences or the significance of the excluded school, the author transitions to discussing more positive experiences, and in fact concludes the chapter on a positive note. The references to negative experiences at Ile-a-la-Crosse provide the reader with a glimpse at survivor understandings that complicate the overarching narrative of *Volume Three* regarding “Metis” experiences. The paragraph regarding abuse contains quotation after quotation from different survivors with little context. For example, “According to one former Île-à-la-Crosse student, ‘Older boys molested younger boys at night in the dormitory and priests and supervisors molested their ‘favorite boys.’”⁴⁴ Metis National Council President Clement Chartier is quoted as explaining, “Many, many of us suffered physical and sexual abuse.”⁴⁵ Mike Durocher is described as someone who was abused at the school and it is noted, “he was expelled at age fifteen for putting up posters that identified abusers. The principal called him a liar, and his parents and grandparents refused to believe his story.”⁴⁶ Finally, part of Robert Derocher’s

⁴¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. p. 33.

⁴² Ibid, p. 45.

⁴³ It must be remembered that Metis people also attended recognized schools. Although status was meant to have determined what schools individuals attended, in reality some people with status attended unrecognized schools and some without attended recognized schools. The Settlement Agreement is based on whether the school attended is included in the agreement, not whether someone has Indian Status or belongs to a Metis community.

⁴⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience*. p. 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

statement before the TRC is included as he explains that “some staff preyed on the students’ loneliness: ‘It seemed that he knew how to pick the, the children that were hurting and to give them any kind of attention that we were all looking for; even if it was not good.’” Only a couple of paragraphs in one chapter discuss physical and sexual abuse, giving readers the impression that Metis experiences differed from First Nations experiences because they were less severe.

These fragments of accounts are not given sufficient weight, and are buried in the middle of a chapter before moving on to more positive stories. In fact the paragraph following the one about abuse begins with, “There were also positive recollections.”⁴⁷ Examples from Ile-a-la-Crosse are provided as positive aspects of the schools, but some of these come from Sarah Riel, who worked there before her passing in the 1880s.⁴⁸ The chapter concludes by returning to the experiences of Therese Arcand and her decision to become a nun. Ending with an emphasis placed on the Catholic Faith as central to the unique “Metis” experience, and a more equal weight given to positive and negative experiences at the schools that the other volumes of the *Final Report*. I contend that this is because of the characterization of Metis as mixed, as well as an unwillingness to openly and critically discuss the exclusion of schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Settlement Agreement and the TRC process.

Subtly, but consistently, reinforcing the idea that racial “mixedness” somehow mitigated the trauma facing the “churchgoing” Metis students compared to First Nations, *Volume Three* implies that Metis experiences were not as bad as those of First Nations at residential schools, evident in the length of the volume, the tone, and the examples provided. This creates the impression that Metis people’s “mixedness” of race and Christian faith somehow worked to make their experience less traumatic – and by implication this works to absolve Canadian society of complicity in the process of genocide against those who attended unrecognized schools because of the authority and public reach of documents like the final report and the continuing work of the NRCTR in informing broader public understandings in Canada about our history of residential schools. To date, Canadian understandings of residential schools do not sufficiently or accurately take into account the story of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse or its exclusion from the Settlement Agreement. The TRC is seen as an authoritative and legitimate source for

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ My discussion of Sarah Riel in chapter two suggests that she was more of an outsider in Ile-a-la-Crosse, as she came there as a Grey Nun. However, some community members note Sarah Riel’s work in their community in efforts to connect to the history of the Metis Nation.

understanding residential schools and is understood to have been a consultative process that prioritized Indigenous and particularly Survivor perspectives. This has not been the case for those labeled as Metis, or who attended unrecognized schools. *Volume Three* and the existing references to Ile-a-la-Crosse in other TRC related materials demonstrate the limitations of the reconciliation process in Canada to date. As the TRC itself has indicated, narratives and stories are the essential first step in the reconciliation process. A logical conclusion would be that excluding the stories of those who attended schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse from sharing their truths in this process is in effect to bar them from the current efforts at reconciliation.

In contrast to the racialized definition of Metis in *Volume Three*, and the tendency to use Indigenous Christianity to dismiss experiences of cultural genocide, my work demonstrates the need for more nuanced discussions of survivors of excluded schools, suggesting that the Catholic faith prevalent in the communities that these individuals came from is essential to understanding their experiences at residential school, including harms that at times resulted in generational differences within communities. Furthermore, this faith is not unique to those who attended excluded schools, and is needed to understand the experiences of individuals who attended recognized schools like BIRS.

Over ten years after Stephen Harper made his promises on MBC Radio (Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation) to address the Ile-a-la-Crosse School, the federal Minister of Indigenous Affairs visited Ile-a-la-Crosse and apologized for what happened to students at the school, and for their exclusion from Canada's reconciliation process. On Thursday September 8th, survivors from across the northwest and beyond gathered under a big top tent in the spot where the residential school had stood, behind the church, near Rossignol elementary school. They arrived early visiting with old friends and family members, finding spots to sit while waiting for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs to arrive. Several of the community members I previously interviewed were in attendance, and I was able to update them about my project and briefly reconnect with them before the event started. The wind blowing off the lake was cool, but far more than the expected 150 survivors and supporters came to share their experiences and hear what the Minister had to say. The event had been planned quickly – with less than a week's notice for people to gather. Some were unable to attend, as there was no funding or arrangements for transportation. Although some who attended the school have spent the rest of their lives in

Ile-a-la-Crosse or the surrounding communities – others have moved far away. Still others were unable to return to the place filled with negative and traumatic memories.⁴⁹

The Minister was late. While waiting for her to arrive the event organizer, chair of the local Boarding School Committee, and longtime Metis political leader, Jim Durocher,⁵⁰ tried to bring the crowd together and explain how the event would proceed. He emphasized, “We finally have an opportunity to try and convince the federal government, Minister Bennett. We need to convince her to deal with the Ile-a-la-Crosse Boarding School the same way they have dealt with First Nations.”⁵¹ In his remarks he repeatedly called upon those in attendance to act professionally and business like, and to work together to convince the Minister to come to the table. He acknowledged the anger many people felt that this day had been so long in coming, and acknowledged that they would not have very much time with the Minister. Names were gathered of those who would be willing to publicly share their story with the Minister. Two themes from Jim’s opening remarks to survivors would be echoed throughout the event—the impact of being excluded and emphasizing a similarity between survivors of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and First Nations who attended recognized schools.

The term First Nations was used to indicate Indigenous peoples with Indian status who attended recognized schools. Some individuals also referred to the IRSSA as the “Treaty IRS settlement,” echoing local uses of the term “Treaty” as discussed in chapter two.⁵² The issue over the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the relationship between that exclusion and Indian status, treaty status, and Metis identity pick up the discussion of status, Metisness and identity politics introduced in chapter three. In some ways, the exclusion of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse from the settlement on the basis that it was not under federal jurisdiction shows the significant affects of seemingly arbitrary legal identities selected by individuals in 1906. With the sexist provisions of the Indian Act that resulted in women losing status when they married men without status, intermarriage across the northwest has resulted in individuals who identified as Metis, Cree, and Dene losing their status, and their children being born without status. Although kinship ties have continued to cross status boundaries, those boundaries affected what

⁴⁹ Amanda Fehr Field Notes; Carolyn Bennett, “Response,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁵⁰ I provide a more detailed introduction to Jim Durocher in chapter six and in Appendix A.

⁵¹ Jim Durocher, Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁵² Max Morin, “Open Microphone: Survival Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

schools individuals were forced to attend, the funding and conditions of those schools, and most recently whether survivors were compensated for their experiences.

Survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school are not only Metis – they are also Dene and Cree. However, because the school was located in what continues to be a predominantly Metis community, and because many who attended the school were Metis, primarily Metis political organizations and politicians have been advocating for its inclusion. Even though it was apparent at the gathering in Ile-a-la-Crosse that it was not just a Metis issue, Metis political leaders at times framed it as such. The First Nation’s or Treaty settlement was referenced as contrasting with their experiences– even though some Metis students attended the recognized schools, and not all included in the national settlement are Treaty or Status Indians. This builds on the discussion of the complex relationship between legal status and Indigenous identities introduced in chapter three. Yet just as the framing of a Treaty settlement versus a predominantly Metis school suggest a dichotomy, the primary arguments for recognition by survivors are the similarities between what happened to students at Ile-a-la-Crosse and at the recognized IRS at Beauval. As Jim Durocher pointed out several times, the only difference between these schools was a distance of thirty miles.⁵³

The connections between communities in the northwest are further apparent through kinship ties. Early that morning Grandma Bébé Sarazine Ratt passed away in her home in Patuanak. She was 104 years old.⁵⁴ Jim announced the passing of Bébé Ratt, who was related to many in the village of Ile-a-la-Crosse, and asked that those gathered say “Our Fathers” for kookum Ratt, as well as for veteran George Raymond who had been buried in the community the day before. The crowd that gathered to hear a federal minister acknowledge their stories and histories of the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse bowed their heads and said “Our Fathers” for a respected elder who until her death had an un-wavering faith in the Catholic Church. Mayor Favel’s mother, Marie Favel, began the official proceedings with a prayer for reconciliation— asking for strength when sharing sacred stories, and praying for reconciliation. The Catholic Church was not represented at the event, but Catholic faith was apparent in the prayers that we began the gathering with as well as the prayer that opened the more formal meeting with the Minister.

⁵³ Jim Durocher, Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Grandma Bébé Ratt, see Appendix A.

As I have noted earlier, the continued Catholic faith within these northern communities is seemingly at odds with the history of colonialism most evident in the residential school system. Although earlier gatherings had hinted at the possibility of going against the Church or suing if necessary, this meeting only included a representative from the federal government.⁵⁵ The continuing Catholic faith of some, and presence of prayer at the gathering on September 8th, 2016, is not mentioned to dismiss the experiences of those who attended the school, or to characterize “Metis” students and their faith as mixed. Rather, as I have suggested throughout this dissertation, the Catholic Church, both spiritually and politically, is significant within local Indigenous histories of northwestern Saskatchewan and it is necessary to consider these dual functions of the Church to more fully understand colonialism in this region, as well as more recent efforts at decolonization and reconciliation.

Minister Bennett joined MNC president Clément Chartier, Member of Parliament Georgina Jolibois, Mayor Duane Favel, and local committee chair Jim Durocher at the front of the tent. Jim Durocher and Mayor Favel welcomed Minister Bennett to their community and provided her with a quick history lesson, mobilizing the deep history of Ile-a-la-Crosse and long standing relationship between the community and Canada, in order to set-up their claim. Mayor Favel situated the small northern village centrally within the story of Canadian expansion, noting the key roles of individuals from the region in expanding the fur trade. Other speakers echoed this emphasis on the deep history of the community that predated both the province of Saskatchewan and Canada as a nation.⁵⁶ Mayor Favel then jumped ahead to the treaty that was signed in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1906, and again to Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s promise to deal with Indigenous peoples in Canada on a nation-to-nation basis. As I discussed in chapter three, treaties are a significant component of the current national narrative of relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers – both in the historical scholarship as well as in the broader national historical consciousness. In Saskatchewan, this is evident in the work of the

⁵⁵ As was discussed in chapter six, the community stood up against the Church during the early 1970s when they took control of the school. This event was a cause for debate and division within the community.

⁵⁶ For example, TJ Roy noted, this “Historic community is a lot older than both the provincial and federal government.” TJ Roy, “Open Microphone, Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016; Louis Gardiner, “Open Microphone, Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

Office of the Treaty Commission (OTC) and their familiar slogan that “we are all treaty people.”⁵⁷

Mayor Favel’s reference to Treaty Ten being signed in Ile-a-la-Crosse brings Ile-a-la-Crosse into this national narrative even though, as discussed in earlier chapters, the treaty process in the northwest and individual decisions between treaty and scrip were filled with ambiguity resulting in status divisions across the region. The impact of that treaty and scrip process can be seen in some students attending the recognized residence at Beauval, and others attending the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Yet, like Mayor Favel’s reference to Canadian expansion, his reference to Ile-a-la-Crosse as the signing place for Treaty Ten is an effort to situate the community, and therefore survivors of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse within current national historical narratives.

Having depicted the history of Ile-a-la-Crosse as fitting within a fairly celebratory Canadian national narrative of Indigenous-settler relations, Mayor Favel identified the one deviation in this relationship as the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRSSA. He explained that in a relationship that began prior to the existence of Canada the one point of frustration was “the refusal of the federal government over the years to include the Ile-a-la-Crosse Boarding School as part of the school settlement and offer the truth and reconciliation the people of the area deserve.”⁵⁸ Contrary to the complex local narratives that have been discussed throughout this dissertation, the one problem that Mayor Favel notes in his history is the exclusion of the school from the Settlement Agreement. The consequences of this exclusion are the denial of both the truth (of the history of residential schools that includes schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse), as well as any chance for reconciliation. What is being asked for in this deliberate narrative, is to fully bring Ile-a-la-Crosse into the national narrative of nation building, treaties, and of residential schools. Other political leaders and survivors at the gathering repeated this strategy of situating the history of Ile-a-la-Crosse within existing, recognized narratives. The exclusion of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse is not being used in this setting to openly critique the existing history of residential schools, or the reconciliation process. Rather, they are affirming this history and process, and advocate being included on the basis of having similar experiences.

Truth, according to Mayor Favel, is not offered by individuals merely sharing their

⁵⁷ See for example The Office of the Treaty Commission, <http://Desjarlais.otc.ca> (accessed September 2016).

⁵⁸ Mayor Duane Favel, “Welcome Remarks,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

stories, but instead by the recognition of those experiences by the federal government. He urged that this recognition is a necessary precursor to any chance at reconciliation. The mayor finished his introductory remarks in expressing hope that they would be able to conclude the boarding school issue after decades of struggle.⁵⁹

Jim Durocher provided the Minister with a more detailed history of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, emphasizing that the Metis who attended there experienced very similar assimilation policies and hardships - including sexual, physical, and psychological abuse - to those who attended recognized schools. Like Mayor Favel, he drew on the deep history of the community, emphasizing that the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse was of one of the oldest residential schools in western Canada – opening in 1860. Durocher’s narrative situated the school as a predominantly Metis school. He explained that in the first year of operation, all but one student was Metis, and over the years thousands attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. He then went on to outline how the precarious stance of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school in the Settlement Agreement, and the repeated references to the possibility of inclusion by political leaders has affected the community. Hopes were high when the IRSSA was negotiated in 2005, and again in January 2006, when Stephen Harper campaigned in the north on the promise to have the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse included in the settlement. As Durocher explained this promise changed one year later, when then Minister of Indian Affairs Jim Prentice went on MBC to say that since the government gained the facts of the matter that Ile-a-la-Crosse did not qualify under the Settlement Agreement. This broken campaign promise resulted in ten years of exclusion from the IRSSA, as well as a perceived exclusion from the apology in 2008, and the work of the TRC.⁶⁰

According to Jim, “no one has apologized to us.”⁶¹ Even though Don Favel, a Survivor of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, and Clément Chartier were on the floor of the House of Commons during the apology, the continued exclusion from the Settlement Agreement has made leaders and survivors feel that the apology did not apply to them. Over ten years of exclusion from the Settlement Agreement and reconciliation process shaped the historical consciousness regarding recent events like the apology, as well as the deeper history of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse.

⁵⁹ Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁶⁰ Jim Durocher, “Background and Update on the Ile a la Crosse Residential School,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Jim Durocher then shifted from the history of the school, to his hope that they would reach an agreement moving forward by praising the Liberal Government for their promises and actions and situating the exclusion of the school within a discussion of Metis rights. He reminded Minister Bennett of the 2015 Liberal Party promise to heal the generational trauma caused by cultural genocide, and a promise to dialogue with Metis survivors and organizations. Durocher sought to distance himself and the committee from the legal action underway by Merchant Law Group, calling for negotiation rather than litigation. Like Mayor Favel, Durocher made note of the liberal promise to engage Indigenous peoples on a nation-to-nation basis, as well as their endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). He referenced Metis rights acknowledged under section 35 of the 1982 Canadian Constitution, as well as Justice Minister Jodie Wilson's willingness to negotiate on Metis Rights, including a test case against the scrip process.⁶² Discussions of Metis rights and a test case against the scrip process complicate Mayor Favel's reference to Treaty Ten being signed in Ile-a-la-Crosse. In addition to trying to situate Ile-a-la-Crosse and its school within an accepted Canadian historical narrative, Durocher's points provide a critique of the federal government's narratives that have justified excluding the school. The historical depth and clear references to Metis rights challenge the narrative of Metis experience presented in *Volume Three*.

Former Mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse and son of Vital Morin, Max Morin, referenced the recent Supreme Court of Canada *Daniels* decision and its implications for federal responsibility regarding Metis peoples. He argued that cases like *Daniels* prove that the federal government should have looked after the best interests of Metis people in residential schools. Morin explained, "when scrip was signed in 1906 they didn't look after our best interests, they failed to meet their responsibility to Ile-a-la-Crosse."⁶³ Durocher and Morin began to critique the jurisdictional argument against recognizing Ile-a-la-Crosse, suggesting the federal government had a fiduciary responsibility historically to take responsibility for Metis people who attended the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. The government's failure historically to fulfill that responsibility is not now evidence that the Ile-a-la-Crosse school does not meet the criteria of the Settlement Agreement. Rather, they need to correct the wrongs of that initial neglect and their exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRSSA.

⁶² Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁶³ Max Morin, "Open Microphone; Survival Testimonials," 8 September 2016. Max's testimony echoed points he had made during our interview in 2014. See Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

Like the framing narratives provided by Mayor Favel and Jim Durocher, testimony from survivors drew attention to the consequences of being excluded from the Settlement Agreement, challenging national narratives of the “Metis” experience by outlining the role of the federal government in the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and by noting similarities between their stories and the accounts of those who attended recognized schools. I do not have space in this chapter to properly include all of the accounts that were shared. Rather, I focus on specific components of survivor’s testimony that was unique or repeated by others, and arrange the following discussion thematically. I attempt to provide some additional context for the individual speakers. For some, it seemed to be their first time publicly sharing their story. Many framed their narratives around the presence of the Minister and their hopes for recognition. Some spoke of how long this day had been in coming, and the effect of not being able to share their stories, or of not being believed had had on their lives. The testimony often focused on being forced to attend the school, the contrast between the school and their life with their families, the loneliness, neglect, and the loss of Indigenous identities. Although several mentioned physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, they did not provide explicit details.

The stories and experiences of those who attended the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse show how northern colonialism included the entangled spiritual, social and political roles of the Catholic Church, and how understanding the Catholic context of survivors’ lives prior to attending the school is necessary to understand their experiences. Rather than Catholicism dismissing the cultural genocide that took place in schools like Ile-a-la-Crosse, it enables us to understand the depth of harms that threats like going to hell would have had on young students, as well as the challenges survivors may have faced when Catholic family members would not believe their stories of abuse. Building on a deeper history of not being able to share stories that might not have been believed by Catholic parents and grandparents, the exclusion of the school from the IRSSA has again created a context where survivors of Ile-a-la-Crosse have not been able to publicly share their stories. The complicated role of Catholicism within local Indigenous histories as well as the exclusion of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Settlement Agreement is reflected in the historical consciousness of survivors. As I have noted in other chapters, experiences in residential schools, including Ile-a-la-Crosse have affected how survivors understand Catholicism. Various understandings of Catholicism and Indigeneity deriving from individual experiences resulted in some rejecting the Catholic faith of their parents and grandparents

because of what happened to them, while others turned to that faith in their efforts at healing. Again, the variety of ways that survivors continue to potentially negotiate their relationships with Catholicism should not be read as a dismissal of the assimilative and cultural genocidal realities of the residential schools at Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Some general themes emerged in the testimony of survivors on September 8th 2016. First, the impact of the exclusion of their school and experiences from the IRSSA and TRC process was apparent in their testimony. The second component evident in many of the survivors' testimony was a call for inclusion or recognition. This was primarily done by noting the role of the federal government in the school—including stories of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) coercing people to attend, the role of the Church as a colonial agent in the north, and the threat of losing family allowance payments. The other way survivors advocated for their stories to be recognized was by outlining the similarities between their experiences and accounts of survivors who attended recognized schools. The spiritual and political power of the Catholic Church in the northwest, as discussed throughout this dissertation, helps to situate these stories. The Catholic faith was significant for many of the survivors of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and provides an essential context for understanding their stories and difficulties later in life sharing their stories. This is not to diminish the accounts of survivors, as the references to Christianity in *Volume Three* seem to do, but rather to contextualize and situate their stories. I provide a fairly detailed account of the first speaker's recounting that brings together many of the above mentioned points, before turning to a thematic discussion of the remaining survivors' testimonies that considers the spiritual components of experiences, the impact of the exclusion, narratives that suggest federal government involvement, and finally stories that emphasize similarities between their experiences and those of survivors who attended recognized schools.

The first speaker spoke for longer than his allocated four minutes. Archie Daigneault from Buffalo Narrows began his story in 1947, when he was first forced to attend the school. He was only seven years old. He explained that his family had been camping behind the church at Ile-a-la-Crosse on their way home from Cree Lake. When they were about to break camp to return to Clear Lake, the priest arrived and declared that he was old enough to go to school. When his parents resisted, the priest threatened to get a RCMP officer. According to Daigneault, that's how he "ended up in the Ile-a-la-Crosse school," a "hard and cruel place" that was more like a

prison.⁶⁴ His recounting then shifted to describing experiences that paralleled the accounts of survivors who attended recognized schools, evident in *Volume One* of the TRC report. Daigneault and many of the other survivors who spoke emphasized the loneliness of being at the school, saying simply, “I cried everyday.”⁶⁵ When he tried to run back to where his family had been camped, his grandma told him they had already left and he better return to the school. He was severely punished for attempting to run away, and told Minister Bennett and those gathered that he still had the scar from when his face was slammed into a door or a desk by the nun. Daigneault said simply, “it hurt so much.”⁶⁶ Two weeks later a priest beat his cousin with a dog whip. In contrast to the love received at home, in the school the only touch was a slap or a hair pull. In addition to these instances of physical abuse that Mr. Daigneault chose to share with those gathered, he emphasized the poor conditions of the school. Being underfed, not given clean water for washing, and forced to go outside to use the bathroom, even though the school had indoor plumbing.⁶⁷

Archie Daigneault also spoke extensively of how the school affected his Catholic faith, an account that demonstrates how taking the Catholicism of Indigenous peoples in the northwest is necessary to fully comprehending their experiences at residential school. He explained that the students were always on their knees, forced to pray when they got out of bed, in mass, and before and after every meal. He stated, “After all the praying the nuns tell us we’d go to hell if we didn’t listen to them or behave. It got to me, they told me I’d go to hell every day.”⁶⁸ Daigneault explained that it made him afraid of God and afraid to go into an empty church by himself. Although the TRC report and some scholars have discussed spiritual violence, this is typically seen as Christianity being forced on Indigenous students who held different, traditional belief systems.⁶⁹ The deeper look at the history of Catholicism in the northwest, provided in this dissertation, shapes my interpretation of Daigneault’s account. For Indigenous Catholics who believed in hell, and whose parents and grandparents believed in hell, being told that they would

⁶⁴ Archie Daigneault, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” *Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue*, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ For example, spiritual violence is placed under the larger umbrella of cultural violence. See “*This Benevolent Experiment*,” pp. 184, 191-195; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Executive Summary*, p. 218, 272, 274; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Volume 1, Part 2*, p. 127, 441, 550, 563-64.

go to hell on a daily basis for actions that while with their parents and even local priest were regarded as acceptable and not a sin, is an incredibly violent form of spiritual abuse. It is necessary to recognize the Catholic faith of many of the students at the school, to appreciate what being told you were ‘going to hell’ might mean, or to comprehend the harm of coming to fear God and entering a church. This would have further isolated students from Catholic family members. Given a limited time frame, with a goal of convincing the Minister to recognize the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, Daigneault chose to emphasize this story, alongside what happened when he tried to run away, his cousin being abused with a whip, and the poor conditions of the school.

The power of the Church spiritually and politically is apparent in the narratives shared in the interviews I conducted and in the testimony before the Minister on September 8th. The political power of the Church, as one of the primary colonial agents in the northwest for much of the twentieth century, demonstrates the potential for individual priests to coerce parents into sending their children to the school. The spiritual power of the Church was due to the sincere Catholic beliefs of many Indigenous people in the northwest – Metis, Cree, and Dene. Being threatened with eternal damnation would also mean a separation from one’s Catholic parents and grandparents.⁷⁰ As has been discussed in earlier chapters, many saw priests and especially bishops as close to God. This meant that some students feared they would not be believed if they shared stories of what happened to them in the schools. Indeed, some Elders within northwestern communities continue to not believe that priests could hurt children, and refuse to accept stories of abuse in the schools.⁷¹ This history within northwestern communities, of fearing one would not be believed, because of the deep Catholic faith of Elders, has been exacerbated by the exclusion of the school from the settlement. As Abraham Gardiner from Jans Bay shared in his testimony, “no one listened to us. They’d tell us ‘that’s not true.’ The old people years ago were brainwashed to believe what the Catholic Church told us.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Parallels are visible here with concerns about going against the Church during the early 1970s, notably Jim Durocher’s account of his mother’s anguish at the possibility that he would not be buried in the cemetery. Jim Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 25 September 2012. See also chapter four.

⁷¹ Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014; Sarazine Ratt, 25 June 2013.

⁷² Abraham Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

After noting the power of the Catholic Church in the community, Abraham Gardiner concluded by saying, “Today I forgive the Catholic Church for what they’ve done.”⁷³ The theme of Catholic faith, and of forgiveness for what happened in the school, was apparent in some of the other testimony. Notably, Antoinette Caisse Lafleur who currently lives in Beauval shared, “I choose to live my life with the Catholic Church.”⁷⁴ Even though Lafleur was abused at the school, and has had difficulty sharing her experiences from that time, she is currently a lay minister with the Catholic Church. Her discussion of the role of the Church in her healing journey at a meeting with a federal minister over the recognition of the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse was unexpected in some ways. Her narrative complicates the more dominant stories of residential school experiences in Canada. In her recounting, her involvement with the Church is part of how she has overcome what happened to her at the school, suggesting the potential role of Catholic faith in decolonizing and healing efforts (as discussed in chapter seven). In contrast, Lawrence Morin who currently lives in Ile-a-la-Crosse attended the school from 1954-62, explained that the memories would never leave and that he was having a hard time forgiving.⁷⁵ Still others used their willingness to forgive as a tool in their arguments for recognition. For example, Max Morin stated, “A lot people say they can’t forgive. Well I’m prepared to forgive the priests and the federal government, if I can do that, surly the federal government and Catholic Church can meet me half ways.”⁷⁶ Max Morin’s forgiveness is less an expression of his faith, and more a statement of the role both the federal government and the Catholic Church played in the residential school at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Abraham Gardiner and Antoinette Caisse Lafleur illustrate the complicated ways that survivors negotiate their relationships with Catholicism throughout their lives. Catholicism was foundational to how children in northwestern Saskatchewan experienced residential school, and understandings of what it means to be Catholic is entangled with personal histories to inform whether they have rejected the Church, embraced it, or continue to struggle. There retellings and various stances on forgiveness, challenge the treatment of Indigenous Catholicism, particularly the absence of legitimate Indigenous Catholicism in the work of the TRC, where to be Catholic is

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Antoinette Lafleur, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

⁷⁵ Lawrence Morin, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁷⁶ Max Morin, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016. Max made similar comments during our interview in 2014, Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

somehow to be less Indigenous, or pro-residential schools. Essentially the narrow view of Indigeneity accepted by the TRC provides little space for being Christian or Metis. Within communities, some Elders who seem to equate Catholicism with being deferential to Church authorities have refused to believe stories of abuse. However, my findings in earlier chapters have illustrated a more complicated history of Indigenous people resisting the authoritarianism of the Church. How community members approach Catholicism is changing, as is the institution of the Catholic Church. I have also found continuity in that how Metis and Dene people historically negotiated their faith was historically more complex than current historical consciousness typically recognizes. The TRC and scholars at times delegitimize Indigenous Christianity by continuing to pit it against Indigeneity and suggesting that Indigenous Christians are Christian despite their history and experiences, fundamentally removing any agency from Indigenous people who identify as Christians and problematically equating Catholic faith with the institution of the Catholic Church. This oppositional view of Catholicism and Indigeneity is one that some community members I have worked with accept. In contrast, as I have shown in previous chapters, how individuals negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity varies within communities, and even within an individual's life as they make decisions of faith from multiple considerations in their lives, which include experiences at residential schools, but also their own positionality, their personal faith, and the complicated, deep history of Catholicism in their communities.

The exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Settlement Agreement and the TRC has become part of the historical consciousness of people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and surrounding areas. Several survivors found it difficult to share their story for the first time, and made references to instances of not being believed, emphasized that they were telling the truth, and commented on the significance of having an opportunity to share. The issue of not being believed goes deeper than the exclusion of the school from the IRSSA to where some Elders because of their Catholic beliefs and associated deference to Church authorities have refused to believe stories of abuse by Church officials. Relatedly, some survivors have feared sharing their stories because of what they believe to be the faith of their parents and grandparents. Speaking was difficult for some, who were unable to find the words, or whose emotions resulted in silences and disjointed narratives. Although speakers like Archie Daigneault had much to share, others found it difficult to fill their allotted four minutes. For example, Violet Benjamin of Dillon shared "I stayed there three years, that was enough for me." She shared some fragments about the poor

food, the discipline, and the meanness of the staff before saying “that’s all I can say, I can’t talk anymore.”⁷⁷ Margaret Aubichon from Patuanak also spoke of how difficult it was for her to share her stories. She attended the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from 1955-68, and recalled not wanting to let go of her dad when he first brought her there.⁷⁸ At that time she only spoke Dene. She explained “I cannot describe—my mind is blank, because the good things in life you remember, but the things that happened to all of us here today, it was a very cruel and difficult time...Today I do not want to remember how I was treated by other people.”⁷⁹ Other survivors did not want to talk about their experience in the school, and their frustration with waiting for meetings and still only the possibility of compensation was apparent. One woman travelled from Fort McMurray for the meeting stated, “I don’t want to talk about what happened to me.” She focused her time on asking when they would be compensated and emphasizing she did not want to wait for more meetings.⁸⁰ Here, not sharing is an act of resistance against a process of detailing painful parts of one’s past to gain recognition and possibly compensation.

There have been many meetings in the northwest regarding the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the settlement, but most survivors have had few opportunities to publicly share their stories. The difficulty in having a chance to try and create a narrative of what happened at the school was most evident in Antoinette Caisse Lafleur’s statement,

Listening to the statements by the other survivors, I said to myself, I am not going to cry. You forget the life, the lost years. When I left school, I buried my memories and feelings from my time there. I rarely spoke about what I went through, and started to rebuild my broken world. Traumatic events, like the school, open old wounds—anger, resentment, loneliness, shame, and fear, inadequacy, failure. I wanted to tell my stories and failures but didn’t find anyone to tell them too. They burned deep in my soul. My sister and I still remember pieces of our experiences, but we did not sit long enough to complete our stories.”⁸¹

Lafleur’s statement draws our attention to the need to “sit long enough to complete our stories,” echoing many of oral historian Henry Greenspan’s ideas discussed earlier about how survivors have to turn non-stories into stories. The exclusion of the school during the past ten years would

⁷⁷ Violet Benjamin, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁷⁸ Margaret Aubichon, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁷⁹ Aubichon, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

⁸⁰ M Cote, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁸¹ Lafleur, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

have reinforced the idea that there was no one for Lafleur to share her experiences with. In their efforts to turn “non-stories” into stories, survivors decide what to include and what not to include in their narrative. This decision may relate to what fits into the narrative, their efforts to communicate with an audience of non-survivors, or what they feel comfortable sharing publicly. During the event on September 8th, survivors were further limited by time, and a need to convince the Minister to recognize their collective claim. Some resisted outlining the painful parts of their past, or providing details of what happened to them. Many included their own assessment of what happened to them, including comparisons to experiences that have been recognized as well as how they have been affected by not having their stories acknowledged. Others noted the emotional components of their experiences and of sharing their stories publicly. Greenspan has noted how survivors’ retellings often do not meet the strict standards of testimony as a list of harms, but incorporate their analysis and knowledge gained from their experiences. He explains that survivors do not simply have memories but rather “in –the bones knowledge, knowledge founded in memories but not reducible to them.”⁸² This is apparent in the testimony by survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, who provided more than a description of what happened to them at the school in their retellings. Their accounts included forgiveness, grief, anger, loneliness, identity, reconciliation, and a path for moving forward.

Emotions were apparent in survivors’ retellings relating to the experiences at the school, and the opportunity to share experiences before a federal minister. Several speakers were preoccupied with the idea of being believed, potentially as a result of not having public spaces to share their stories because of the exclusion of the school. IRS survivors from across Canada have had opportunities to share their stories, and shifts in our national historical consciousness towards recognizing residential schools as cultural genocide have provided safer spaces for survivors to share stories of loss, grief, assimilation, and abuse with the promise of being believed. For many who attended the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, speaking before Minister Bennett was the first time they had an opportunity to share their stories and feel like they might be believed. Beyond this, coming together as a community to listen to each other, and affirm the truth of what fellow survivors were saying, was emotional. Hope and happiness were apparent, as survivors were able to share their experiences with the Minister and with each other as they came together as a community. Marie-Ange Greyeyes nee Daigneault noted that the gathering was “one of happiest

⁸² Greenspan, “From Testimony to Recounting,” p. 144.

days” she had experienced, where the gathered survivors had “suffered the same,” and could “now be happy and rejoice together.”⁸³

Abraham Gardiner described, having tears in his eyes while listening to others speak.⁸⁴ He went on to address the significance of creating a space where survivors of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse might have their stories believed. He explained that when his wife asked him about what happened at school, she did not believe his story. In contrast, the morning of the meeting with the Minister he had “the guts” to tell his girl about how they were humiliated if there were brown marks on their underwear. Gardiner’s story of not being believed by a loved one, and having the courage to share his experiences again, draws attention to a consequence of the school being excluded from the Settlement Agreement. Notably, it draws attention to the failure to officially validate the experiences of students who attended the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse as on par with students who attended recognized schools. While the school remains unrecognized, and separate from the larger reconciliation process in Canada, the experiences of students who attended that school continue to be seen as less-than. In this way, although there has generally been a shift in Canadian historical consciousness regarding residential schools, this shift has not included those left out of the national reconciliation process.

The time survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse spent waiting for the chance to share their stories was observed by several speakers, as was the fact that many of their fellow survivors passed away waiting for this day to happen. This waiting and its effects have become part of how people share their stories. Jules Daigneault attended the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and continues to live in the community. He introduced himself to the Minister saying, “Maybe we’ll have a miracle. It’s been a long time waiting, long time. We’ve been fighting too much because of what happened at the school.”⁸⁵ Jules’ emphasis on waiting for recognition, and the fact that this has

⁸³ Marie-Ange Greyeyes, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁸⁴ Abraham Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

⁸⁵ I first met Jules in 2006 and have interviewed and met with him several times. Although he has hesitated to discuss his experiences at the school, generally describing them as bad, he has also emphasized the need for people to write about those stories. Jules’ position in the community seems ambiguous, while he often attends events and has been invited by the school as an Elder to participate in projects, he is also someone who other community members have described as a good storyteller. Jules and his wife refer to him as a joker. His testimony in front of the Minister was consistent with things he has shared before, though the crowd seemed more restless while he was speaking. Jules Daigneault, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

caused conflict in the community was echoed by others who focused on the need for reconciliation and healing.

Like the political leadership, survivors were familiar with broader national efforts of reconciliation and the work of the TRC, and requested that the national effort at reconciliation include them.⁸⁶ Rather than critique the reconciliation process they hoped, and even prayed, to have their stories and experiences incorporated, drawing attention to the urgency of a settlement to address current challenges in their communities related to the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. This shows the broader harms that exclusion from the settlement has caused, as families and communities perceive that they have not had the opportunity to begin to heal like those who have attended recognized schools have had. Community activist and development worker in Ile-a-la-Crosse T.J. Roy commented on the governments “dealings with First Nations,” leading to reasonable compensation for what they have suffered. He then positioned those who attended in Ile-a-la-Crosse as the cousins of those First Nations, and asked Minister Bennett to deliver the message to her government colleagues that “we’ve gone through lots of hurt, abuse, lots of suffering, trauma, it’s time to be proactive and move forward, to find reconciliation and healing in our communities.”⁸⁷ T.J. then provided examples of drug and alcohol abuse and emotional abuse he has witnessed in his community, and the need to discuss healing initiatives that incorporate their proud Metis culture.⁸⁸ Other survivors echoed T.J.’s references to dysfunction in the communities relating to what happened at the school, and called for healing and support programs to address the intergenerational effects of the school.⁸⁹ As Margaret Aubichon observed, “Today’s society is abusive. It’s not their fault, you can’t wash away the abuse they received.”⁹⁰

Earlier chapters examined more recent problems in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak relating to the colonialism, assimilation policies, and genocide that took place over much of the twentieth century. When considered together, these chapters show the various, shifting, and at times overlapping efforts of community members to address the harms of the colonial project, through

⁸⁶ For example Louis Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016; Margaret Aubichon, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

⁸⁷ T.J. Roy, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ M. Cote, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016; Glen McCallum, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

⁹⁰ Margaret Aubichon, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” September 8th 2016.

moving towards local control, Catholic faith, regaining Indigenous spirituality, and advocating for a settlement with the federal government regarding the school. The previous chapter's focus on Marian devotion in healing efforts should be seen as coinciding with events in this chapter, rather than preceding them. Communities have been trying to heal themselves, but as the above quote from Margaret Aubichon demonstrates, they "can't simply wash away the abuse they received." Her phrasing here can be read to echo the idea of "washing away sin," suggesting ways that her Catholic upbringing may inform how Aubichon makes sense of the abuse in the school, and that Catholic faith alone is not enough to address the legacy of the schools.⁹¹ In this way her statement is both a call to Catholic community members to more directly address residential school experiences, and a call to the government to support survivors in their efforts.

In addition to sharing the consequences of the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRSSA, survivor testimony challenged their exclusion from the settlement by providing evidence of federal involvement in the school and in outlining how their experiences were similar to those who attended recognized schools. The role of the Catholic Church as a representative of colonial power in the northwest, the presence of the RCMP in coercing people to attend the school, and the threat of losing family allowance payments were highlighted by survivors, directly challenging the reasons provided by the federal government for excluding the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and those echoed in *Volume Three*.⁹² Descriptions of how survivors came to

⁹¹ My interpretation is supported by Max Morin's observation that some survivors of abuse have not addressed what happened to them, choosing instead to bury themselves in their faith. Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

⁹² The use of Family Allowance payments to coerce parents to send their children to school came up in earlier interviews and conversations I have had with community members, and at earlier meetings about the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. For example Clément Chartier explained, "well, yeah, it's [pause] see it used to be common knowledge that the mission would get the family allowance for the kids that were there. How we knew I don't know it was just common knowledge." During our interview in 2014 Max Morin drew attention to family allowance payments, as well as other ways that the federal and provincial governments provided financial support for the residential school in Ile-a-la-Cross. This typically occurred through in-kind contributions (such as family allowance payments) and through sharing equipment and resources (like the generator for the power that served the hospital and the school that were both mission run. Additionally, Max explained that the staff who were running the school were at times paid from the hospital budget which included money from the federal and provincial governments. In addition to the in-kind financial contributions that the provincial and federal governments made to the hospital and therefore the school, Max noted the significance of the threat of removing children if they were not sent to school. Max explained, "and the reason why we're in school, my dad had a mink ranch across and was seven or eight kilometers away and so either you put your kids in school or they'll be taken away by social services. That's what the Elders told me, and I don't think the Elders would lie and also they had these generators, they had power in the hospital, in the school, in that area and the generators were provided by the federal government." Max Morin, 15 July 2014. Clément Chartier, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ottawa, 14 January 2014. See also: Buckley Belanger, Personal Conversation, August 2013; Liz Durocher, Personal Conversation, 2012; Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, October 2012; Duane Favel, Interview with Amanda Fehr,

attend the school included references to the federal government's involvement. Abraham Gardiner, who started school in 1948, explained how the priests used family allowance and welfare payments as leverage, "I remember the priest came to Canoe Lake to see the old people with children. He told families who had kids to bring the kids to Ile-a-la-Crosse School. If you don't, the government won't help anybody."⁹³ Gardiner shared that while he was not bothered by what the priest said because he was small, his dad was upset. His parents were crying and his dad said, "got to stay here, do what the priest wants."⁹⁴

Jules Daigneault had a similar story, where taking away family allowance payments from the federal government and the threat of force from the RCMP were used to coerce parents into sending their children to the school. Jules explained that they wanted to,

Pick up all the kids across the lake to come to the school, the RCMP with the priest, all in black. The RCMP... had a pistol. Came to the house, a little log cabin. There were four of us, me and my sister... I was six, my sister five. They asked my mom in French if they could come pick up the kids. Mom, 'what?' not understand French, not understand English, all she understand is Cree.⁹⁵

Jules went on to explain how they threatened to take away the money his mom received from the federal government, and that the police had a pistol. His mom was confused and did not know what to do, but his dad said to let the kids go.⁹⁶ Jules explained that his parents were scared of the RCMP and their guns, and the priest forced them to sign, even though his mom did not know how to sign her name.⁹⁷ Similarly, Angus Gardiner who currently lives in Ile-a-la-Crosse shared that he "came here [Ile-a-la-Crosse] in 55, ten years old. Parents no choice but to let us go, as others say, cops around. No choice."⁹⁸ In earlier chapters I have outlined the power that the priests had in the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse and surrounding areas, especially during the middle of the twentieth century. This was the violence and colonialism that people in Ile-a-la-Crosse were reacting against in the early 1970s when they took over the school. To understand the political power of the Church it is necessary to consider its role as a provider of social welfare and as a liaison between communities and the federal government (for example in advocating for

Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 July 2014; Margaret McIntyre, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation; and Statements made at the Ile-a-la-Crosse Public Meeting Regarding the Residential School Claim, March 2015.

⁹³ Abraham Gardiner, "Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials," 8 September 2016.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Jules Daigneault, "Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials," 8 September 2016.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Angus Gardiner, "Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials," Ile a la Crosse Residential School Dialogue, Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 September 2016.

a treaty to be signed and later during the treaty negotiations), and subsequently as the primary point of contact between the government and the people of the northwest, in the absence of a permanently stationed Indian Agent. That political power of the priests, plus their ability to call upon the RCMP and threaten to cut off federal family allowance payments resulted in local understandings of federal involvement in the Ile-a-la-Crosse school.

In addition to challenging the federal government's argument that Ile-a-la-Crosse was outside of their jurisdiction, survivors noted the extensive similarities between their experiences and survivors who attended recognized schools. Here, historical consciousness was shaped by an awareness of what those who attended recognized schools have said, as well as the work of the TRC. In this way, efforts to make sense of their own experiences and to craft narratives of what happened to them in the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse have not taken place in isolation. Antoinette Lafleur described her reaction to a "book on truth and reconciliation," saying "stories in that book were like I'm telling my story." In response she closed the book because she "couldn't deal" but neither could she forget.⁹⁹ Marie-Ange Greyeyes shared how reading books about the history of residential schools helped her to make sense of her own experiences at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, where she stayed for nine years. She described losing her identity explaining, "I did not know who I was, they told me how to think, how to pray."¹⁰⁰ The cost of losing her identity was alcoholism. She shared:

I didn't have my own honest true identity until I was grown-up. I read books, taught myself books, read history books about the beginning of the boarding schools. It was not just the Roman Catholic Church – other Churches, and the federal government gave money to start the schools. They had an agreement. One thing they had to do was take the Indian out of child. Then I understood why I was treated the way I was. I was a good little Indian, but a very angry white girl.¹⁰¹

Greyeyes' recounting offers insight into her historical consciousness, how her reading of national histories of residential schools helped her to situate and understand her own experiences. The federal government did support the creation of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and her experiences at the school fit with the assimilative goal of the recognized schools to "take the Indian out of the child." Greyeyes' recounting to convince the Minister to recognize Ile-a-la-Crosse draws on the accepted narrative of IRS in Canada, and fits her own story within it, rather than challenging it.

⁹⁹ Lafleur, "Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials," 8 September 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Greyeyes, "Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials," 8 September 2016.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

The irony of course is that while Greyeyes sees the parallels between her experiences and the history of residential schools, these similarities have not been acknowledged by the IRSSA.

Several other speakers noted experiences at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse that are similar to those of survivors documented in *Volume One* of the TRC, including loneliness, loss of language, loss of identity, being given a number, inadequate food, separation from family, absence of love, being given a number, inappropriate clothing for the weather, being forced to pray, being forced to work, negligence, and abuse.¹⁰² The distance and difference between life in the bush with parents or grandparents and life at the school was stark. Happy memories of hunting and suppers of rabbit and duck were contrasted with starving in the school.¹⁰³ As Lawrence Morin explained, we spent “half the time starving” in the school.¹⁰⁴ Many mentioned the number they were given at the school. Lawrence Morin explained, “Me and Clem were in boarding school together, my number was 42, his 46.”¹⁰⁵ The testimony shared on September 8th echoed what survivors of the recognized schools have shared. This was a way for survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school to advocate for their inclusion by drawing attention to similarities, and showing how their experiences fit within the recognized narrative, rather than challenging the narrative itself.

Jules Daigneault connected the number he was assigned at the school to being racialized. In his recounting, it was unclear if he was purposefully trying to use humour, or if his position within the community resulted in laughter and restlessness in response to his story. Although the response to Jules’ story was atypical compared to other speakers at the event, his story echoed and contained parallels with what others shared. Beyond this, he was the only survivor to provide specific details that indicated how he was sexualized and racialized at the school. He shared that when he first arrived at the school he was forced to shower three times, the nun kept inspecting his naked body. He explained that the nun “Thought I was dirty because I was brown... I couldn’t talk, just sit like a dummy. I was here for eight years. I lost my name, not have one, just number 54... for 8 years, just like hell.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Lawrence Morin, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016; Jules Daigneault, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016; Abraham Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

¹⁰³ Abraham Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence Morin, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; Louis Gardiner, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Jules Daigneault, “Open Microphone: Survivor Testimonials,” 8 September 2016.

To Jules his experiences at the school were like hell, and the promise of a settlement was a miracle. His story, and its reception were uncomfortable. The laughter at the event seemed inappropriate, as he described his naked child body being scrutinized. It is possible that his joking delivery for the first part of the story was necessary to share a painful experience, or a communication technique developed by someone who is not always well received by his own community. Perhaps, Jules' willingness to share more details of what happened to him, and to describe nakedness, is a story that the broader community is still uncomfortable with. In comparison, the other recountings were more vague in their references to abuse.

Greenspan's scholarship further assists in interpreting these public narratives. As noted above, survivors did not simply list off the harms, and many of their experiences are beyond that of trauma. In his critique of the term trauma, Greenspan suggests:

It does not subsume all the anguish that survivors have known: abandonment, isolation, desolation, degradation, humiliation, all the physical agonies... not perceived as immediately life threatening, helplessness to help others, often central in survivors accounts – above all – loss and grief, which is what being a survivor of genocide means most literally.¹⁰⁷

Isolation, degradation, humiliation, helplessness, and grief were evident in the recountings of survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, apparent in their efforts to share what had happened to them and to convince the Minister to recognize their claim in the limited time they had. Their testimony did not provide lists of harms, or even many details of their experiences, though one could see how they attempted to make sense of their exclusion, and to fit themselves within the recognized narrative of residential schools.

Not all survivors in attendance at the event on September 8th were able to share their stories, partially due to time constraints, but also because of the focus of the meeting on a particular narrative of the school. Beyond this, there were some who attended the school who did not attend the community meeting, and others within the community who did not attend the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse. I have interviewed Tony Durocher several times before, and was happy, though somewhat surprised to see him at the meeting. He was absent from a meeting about the school that I attended in the spring of 2015, and has shared that his experience at the Ile-a-la-Crosse school was fairly positive, describing, "There's lots of things that my way of believing

¹⁰⁷ Greenspan, "From Testimony to Recounting," p. 143.

stuff doesn't quite get in with some people. Like the convent, I like the convent, myself."¹⁰⁸ His mother was a widow, and they were poor, so within his personal narrative he frames attending the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse to be a place where he had his own bed to sleep in and received three meals a day.¹⁰⁹ Tony understands that his experience at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse differed from that of school friends who were leaving different family circumstances. He only noted a couple of experiences of hearing Elders and Veterans share views of positive experiences at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, for reasons similar to his own. Tony explained, "So you hear a little bit from the other side once in a while, but most of the time they have a hard time. Maybe something happened to them, I don't know. But they had to leave, people from across the lake, they had to come stay in the convent because their parents lived across the lake. And maybe that was a shock to them, I don't know."¹¹⁰ This fits with my observations in the previous chapter of how one's socio-economic status could influence how they perceived their residential school experience fitting into their broader life history. In this way, some who were orphaned or the children of widows, like Tony reflect more positively on their experiences. In contrast, as Tony observes those leaving families from across the lake and throughout the northwest had different experiences in coming to the school.¹¹¹

The Church played a significant role in the northwest as a provider of social welfare, taking in orphans and the children of widows. Between disease and accidents associated with trapping and living off the land, these numbers could be noteworthy. This was a significant context for some individuals who frame the school and their experiences there in a more favourable light, much differently than those who contrasted the sufferings there with a happy home life. In this light, the school was still assimilative, negligent, and provided inadequate food and clothing; however, it offered more than what some individuals had access to before they came to the school. In other words providing relief to the destitute shows the more benevolent,

¹⁰⁸ Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Another scholar interviewed Tony about his experiences at the Ile-a-la-Crosse school. Tony mentioned that he was concerned that the scholar was just looking for negative experiences. He explained: "I had talked to him [the university researcher] about, and I'm pretty sure he had asked me about the convent. In fact I was trying to figure him out, now that I remember. Just like he was wanted me to say the convent was no good...Of course, that didn't work out. There's nothing bad about the convent in my mind. Because he was bringing up questions, they forced kids to work in the garden. So I read that, yeah, I told him they might have but not when I was there, so stuff like that. I could have said oh yeah, they forced them and they went to work at daylight to dark, just to make it sound good."¹¹¹ Here, Tony's own experiences do not meet the expectations of an outside scholar, or current historiographical trends. Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

paternalistic, and possibly even well intentioned side of the Church's colonialism. Some students who attended the school as orphans came to consider the priests and nuns like family.¹¹² Others I spoke with have pointed out that orphans and those with families far away were some of the most vulnerable students at the school, as they did not have parents regularly checking in to make sure they were well treated okay.¹¹³ Buckley Belanger shared with me that he was treated okay, because his dad was a pilot who was around a lot, but that in his assessment other students without family connections did not fare as well.¹¹⁴

The issue of Elders, parents and grandparents not believing stories of abuse in the Ile-a-la-Crosse school was brought up by multiple people testifying before Minister Bennet, and in several of my own interviews. Previous chapters have considered the perception and reality of some Elders equating Catholic faith with deference to Church authorities, and a belief that as servants of God, priests and nuns would not be capable of hurting children. This disbelief has resulted in divisions across generations, such as that between Bernie Eaglechild and her mother Christine George that I discussed in earlier chapters. Elders like Grandma B     Ratt also refused to believe the stories, though her sister in law, Eliza Aubichon, openly shared experiences of being beaten by a nun and has been waiting for a settlement for the Ile-a-la-Crosse school.¹¹⁵ Other Elders that I spoke with, like Tony, noted their own positive views of the schools, though Tony recognized that his views differed from others in his community. The range of experiences reflects differing approaches to Catholicism as well as different personal experiences and at times senses of what constitutes abuse and harsh treatment. For example, some of Grandma B     Ratt's brothers died in the Beauval Indian Residential School fire in 1927¹¹⁶ – an incident that killed nineteen boys and is cited by others as an example of the inadequate conditions of the IRS system.

Elders Ovide and Irene Desjarlais' views of the residential schools were equally complex and intersected with their own personal histories, experiences attending the schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval, and their Catholic faith.¹¹⁷ Ovide's father Francois worked at the mission in Beauval, so he attended Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS). When Ovide attended BIRS

¹¹² Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

¹¹³ Buckley Belanger, Personal Conversation, August 2013.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Eliza Aubichon, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 16 October 2012.

¹¹⁶ Sarazine Ratt, 25 June 2013

¹¹⁷ See my more detailed discussion of Ovide and Irene's Catholic faith as well as support for local control in chapters six and seven.

in the 1930s and 1940s, he was taught to write syllabics in Cree, because of his own experiences he has trouble accepting stories that people lost their language at the school. He explained:

But they say you can't talk your own language there, and it's all B.S. Oh yeah, mm hmm, I don't know about Ile-a-la-Crosse, but Beauval anyway, that's where they showed us to write syllabics, how to read syllabics. And so the Dene people, they had a nun showing them too. So they're saying they lost all their language from going to residential school, it is not true at all. You hear a lot of that today. But, I went to school there, so I know.¹¹⁸

Ovide's own experiences at BIRS inform his understanding more generally of residential schools. His family left Beauval in 1945 when Ovide was fifteen, and he remembers going into the bush to cry because he did not want to move. Variation in experiences, between the children of staff members and those who may have been more vulnerable as well as changing curriculum and staff at the schools results in a range of student experiences.

Irene also emphasized a positive experience noting she could speak her language and did not see people being abused. It was when reflecting on her sister Flora's experience of being separated from their parents at Halfway Lake that Irene expressed sadness. She explained:

Harper went on the air and apologized to the, I just had a good cry, I was thinking about my sister I said to them, I was thinking about the time she was brought in. That was the only thing I wanted somebody to apologize to her. She was so small. And then after supper, she had her hair cut, the famous hair cut. She had curly hair and they all came down, and (pause) otherwise everything is fine.¹¹⁹

Considering that Irene's experiences would have mirrored her younger sister, her reflections and sadness over what happened to her sister complicate my understanding of her own experiences. This also suggests that it remains difficult for some community members to speak personally about their experiences at the school.

Catholicism was the reason some children were sent to the schools. Ovide explained that in the old days the reason children were sent to school was for catechism and to receive the sacraments. He described, "A lot of kids went to school for catechism, and then they were taken out."¹²⁰ Again, the context of an Indigenous Catholic community is necessary to understand how the schools may have been understood by earlier generations. This motivation for some parents to send their children to the schools would have made it even more difficult for survivors to share stories of abuse.

¹¹⁸ Irene and Ovide Desjarlais, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 October 2012.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Max Morin drew attention to how the tendency for some Elders not to believe stories of abuse effectively silenced people from speaking out, and that some people today will still not speak about what happened to them because of the sense in the community that you should not speak against the nuns or priests. Max explained:

And when we were on the boarding school we couldn't even say anything against the priests or the nuns. Nobody would believe us, they were a man of god or a woman of God, you can't say anything. If somebody said the priest was sexually abusing me, 'you shut up, you don't talk like that.' In Cree they talked to us like that so we kept silent...yeah even today you can still feel it. People who were abused won't come out, they won't come out. They still hold it inside. Their fate they settled, go to church, and confession, and communion but they can't deal with what's hurting them inside and the healing can't start. And it passes on generation to generation. People don't realize that.¹²¹

Max raises questions about how the silences about the schools should be interpreted in communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak where there is a deep local history against speaking out about abuse, relating to the Catholicism prevalent in the community. It is a caution not to interpret individuals who do not openly speak about abuse in the schools as survivors who were not abused, and the significance of generational shifts that have resulted in some community members publicly sharing their stories, even though some community members to this day will not believe them.¹²² As I have noted in previous chapters, Max is not anti-Church. He recognized the significance of his father's Catholic faith, and did not dismiss his father's views of BIRS that did not align with stories of abuse. This suggests the capacity for Catholic faith today to silence survivors, and for others, to be a potential avenue of healing that coexists with an awareness of the genocidal nature of the residential schools.

In contrast to survivors who have buried experiences of abuse in their Catholic faith, others have left the Catholic Church because of their experiences at residential schools. Dorothy Dubrule, whose brother was sexually abused at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and is herself a lay minister with the Church shared with me how she struggles with her Catholic faith because of the

¹²¹ Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

¹²² For example during a 2015 public meeting about the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school, an emotional survivor recounting her experiences at the residential school was interrupted by an Elder telling her she was lying. The survivor responded that was glad that he did not have the same experiences as she did at the school. The Elders I was sitting with critiqued that man, and dismissed his comments.

history of residential schools in her community and her family.¹²³ Dorothy shared some of her challenges, as well as how her views have shifted in recent years. She explained:

So now that I'm more involved in the Church now, I still see a lot of pain in peoples in you know in the attitudes that they have towards the authority, the authority of the Catholic Church and what it represents. There's still a lot of people that are, are hurt by that and of course we just never get over the boarding school syndrome, you know the residential school syndrome. So that's, you hear about it almost on a daily level, you read about it and I used to think to myself, you know it doesn't really bother me, I went and you know blah blah blah, but you know in recent years, I've thought about it a lot. And the things that happened to myself and my brothers, so you know there's still that pain that's present today and it's really, it's really hard just working in the Church and trying to draw or get people to be comfortable and come back to service, and feel welcomed. You know the whole thing is that idea of being welcomed back. Not to the same thing that had been, but to a more loving attitude. But, it's tough on folks.¹²⁴

In previous chapters I considered the varying ways members of Dorothy's family have negotiated their relationship with the Church. What is significant in this chapter is considering that within a historically Catholic community, one of the effects of the Indian Residential Schools has been that community members have left the Church of their parents and grandparents. One of Dorothy's challenge as a lay minister is to welcome people back to the Church in efforts to heal amidst the unresolved issue of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school in broader Canadian processes at reconciliation.

Discussing the Catholic faith of some community members and how that faith combined with varying life experiences has led some to disbelieve stories of abuse at the schools does not negate the reality of that abuse. Rather it suggests the importance of situating the history of the schools within the broader Catholic histories of communities like Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Elders like Tony Durocher and Ovide Desjerlais reflecting on their positive experiences, in part because of their particular positionality should not be seen as an apology for the schools. I share these stories here because I do not want to contribute to their erasure, and because of the need to describe the complex role of the Church in the community, as both an agent of colonialism as well as place of true faith and support for community members. Whereas for Tony the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse offered his own bed and three meals a day, for others it was a separation from family across the lake, socio-economic traditions, and the healthy, more plentiful food prepared

¹²³ For an introduction to Dorothy see chapter seven and Appendix A. I provide a more detailed discussion of Dorothy's struggles with her faith and the experiences of her brothers at the school in chapter seven.

¹²⁴ Dorothy Dubrule, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 8 October 2014.

by parents and grandparents. And many others were not safe in the schools, where they were physically and sexually abused. Part of my argument in this chapter and throughout this dissertation is the need to recognize the agency of individuals who choose to be Catholic, and the complex historical forces that have affected how Dene and Metis people in northwestern Saskatchewan negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity.

The role of the Church as a provider of social welfare, aid, and assistance has been recognized by many I spoke with, especially older people, as part of how they survived during the depression and the 1940s. However, this role also meant that the Church had considerable power within the community, and could be seen as representing distant governments in Regina and Ottawa. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, the fact that the Church and other white individuals (such as teachers and the store clerk) held the bulk of power within the community was paternalistic and colonial. Furthermore, the paternalistic aspects of the Church's role as a provider of aid helped to cement its power in the northwest, both spiritually and politically. As a result, the violent aspects of its colonialism, perhaps most evident in the experiences of students attending the schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval in the mid-twentieth century, were magnified as students had little recourse in their own families and communities because of the power and respect that people had for the priests and the Church. And, as the authors of the two-part *Volume One* of the TRC Final Report have indicated, the positive experiences of a few residential school survivors and the good intentions of some of those involved in running the schools does not outweigh the assimilative goals of the schools, the inadequate conditions, the negligence, or the rampant abuse. I would add that identifying as Indigenous and Catholic also does not denigrate those realities of the schools.

Survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school have not been given the same spaces to share their stories and participate in the reconciliation process, so individuals who attended the school have not had the opportunity to make sense of their experiences. This has been apparent in some of the interviews I have done, where survivors are beginning to reevaluate their experiences at the school. Experiences, such as older girls showing their underwear to be checked publicly by the nuns, that people had previously normalized, are starting to be reevaluated as individuals become aware of the larger conversations about what happened in residential schools across Canada.¹²⁵ Understanding how the experiences of students who

¹²⁵ Dorothy Dubrule, 9 August 2013.

attended the Ile-a-la-Crosse differ from survivors of recognized schools is in appreciating the political and spiritual power of the Church, how colonialism functioned in the north, and in the fact that their experiences have yet to be recognized.

Several survivors of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school made reference to the First Nations or Treaty settlement. From the perspective of the excluded, what was included in that settlement seems “fair.” My work in Patuanak with individuals who attended the recognized IRS at Beauval complicates this optimistic view. Individuals who had gone through the IAP shared concerns with that model. Some were angry about the legalistic process and model, and others expressed needing to take a step back from the Catholic Church after the process of reliving their experiences at the school in Beauval. Many did not want to discuss their experiences in detail on the record. Like those who attended the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, the IRSSA, the apology, the TRC, and the IAP have affected BIRS survivors’ historical consciousness. Recognition of BIRS has not yet resulted in full healing due to an imperfect IAP model.¹²⁶ As Ovide Wolverine explained when I asked him if the settlements for the residential schools changed things in the community, “well there’s no more residential schools now [pause]. Well there was an apology made by the Harper government and I don’t know if it changed anything, but some, well what ever happens it’s always here, and there’s always a little hatred. So I never did like the nuns.”¹²⁷ Ovide never liked the nuns, but as I have noted in previous chapters he is a practicing Catholic who plays the guitar and Church, and has reluctantly acted as a lay minister. Other survivors who I worked with in Patunaak likewise have complicated and varying understandings of what it means to be Catholic and Indigenous.

There is still a need for survivors who attended the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse to, as Antoinette Lafleur stated, “sit long enough to complete our stories,” and even then as Greenspan reminds us, they will likely be limited in putting their experiences into a narrative form. I argue that there is a need for a space that does not equate survivors’ Catholicism with dismissing what happened to them in the schools. Regardless of when or how recognition is achieved, the absence of recognition has shaped the historical consciousness of survivors who attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. This dissertation has set out to provide Indigenous perspectives of the broader political and spiritual history of the Roman Catholic Church – an institution that was a

¹²⁶ Amanda Fehr, Field Notes.

¹²⁷ Ovide Wolverine, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 11 February 2014.

close affiliate of the federal government from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries and a faith community in which Indigenous people were, and some continue to be, members. During the ten years that I have been visiting Ile-a-la-Crosse, the contemporary power and beauty of Mary and pilgrimages to Lac Ste. Anne seem to an outsider to uncomfortably sit alongside a profound historical legacy of violence and cultural genocide in the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school. Here, the potential for the Catholic faith as a means of healing sits at odds with the historic power of the Church as a colonial agent. These regional stories of Indigenous people in northwestern Saskatchewan being excluded from a national process raise troubling questions about that process, and efforts at healing and reconciliation more generally. The limited treatment of “Metis” experiences by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in *Volume Three* has resulted in perpetuating racialized narratives of Metis as mixed Christians whose experiences in the schools were less-than those of First Nations survivors. More generally, this ahistorically reinforces the notion that to be Catholic is to be less-Indigenous. In contrast, my own findings indicate the necessity of understanding the Catholic history of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, and the range of ways that community members historically and today have negotiated Catholicism and Indigeneity.

The testimony offered by the political leadership and survivors at the meeting in Ile-a-la-Crosse with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs in 2016 suggests the impact their exclusion from the IRSSA has had on individuals, their communities, and local historical consciousness. Notably, the testimony advocated for inclusion by drawing attention to the spiritual and political power of the Roman Catholic Church in the northwest, and the similarities between the student experiences at Ile-a-la-Crosse and those at recognized schools. By considering individual stories and experiences previously excluded from existing national narratives of cultural genocide and efforts at reconciliation, we gain a better understanding of the complicated relationships between region and nation, the considerable impact that imposed legal identities has had on specific communities, and the roles of Catholicism, both political and spiritual, in both the colonial and the reconciliation processes.

Conclusion

“Just like the one I was telling you about, that little Cat [Caterpillar Track Bulldozer] coming, you just see one side. That’s how history is sometimes, it depends who’s telling it... They didn’t get the true story huh, so they wrote what they heard, third party. Well I hope that helps you a little bit.”¹

-Tony Durocher

“Not always negative, not always critical of stuff, but always have that conversation of openness, that conversation of possibilities. Because we were also taught to come from a place of possibilities where anything is possible, and that’s how our teachings teach us... And to other people it’s out of the ordinary but to you it’s life, its okay because those are the teachings. You’ve already been practicing that you’re already expecting that to happen, so it isn’t “oh shit.” Because I’ve seen Elders ask the tree to dance and the tree will shake and that’s how connected they are. And that’s amazing. Amazing, amazing stuff... Interview done.”²

-Patrick Daigneault

Throughout this dissertation I have argued for the need to create space for Indigenous Christianity within the field of Canadian Indigenous history—beyond questions of conversion and the history of residential schools—and to include the experiences of Indigenous Christians within a broadened understanding of Indigeneity. Setting out to take the metaphysical seriously,³ my work in Ile-a-la-Crosse and with the English River First Nation (Patuanak) has shown the multiple and complicated ways that Metis, Cree, and Dene peoples make sense of 170 years of Catholic history in their communities as they negotiate varied understandings of Catholicism and Indigeneity. I have also attempted to provide a more open account of the relational aspects of my work with community members like Elder Tony Durocher and Patrick Daigneault. The words quoted above that Tony and Patrick used to conclude our interviews help to situate this conclusion where I draw connections between the previous chapters and suggest some of my historiographical and methodological contributions, as well as the limits of my work and possible areas of future scholarship.

Tony concluded our nearly two-hour conversation on November 9th 2014 by returning to the story of Brother Guay bringing the Cat to the burning school in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1972, and Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie’s subsequent depiction of that story in his book that missed the “story

¹Tony Durocher, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 November 2014.

²Patrick Daigneault, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Prince Albert, 28 August 2014.

³John Sutton Lutz, “First Contact as a Spiritual Performance: Encounters on the North American West Coast,” in *Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, edited by John Sutton Lutz (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), p. 45.

before the story” of Tony begging Guay to help out by bringing the Cat.⁴ In chapter six, I considered the significance of Tony’s story in terms of local historical consciousness of the takeover of the school. In chapter one, I suggested Tony’s call to consider the “story before the story” supported my deeper consideration of Indigenous Catholicism during the twentieth century as well as my intention to be open about my methodologies. When Tony returned to the one sided image of the Cat at the end of our interview, it was in the context of a discussion about history. Our interview shifted from Tony’s memories of the takeover to those of his time in the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school. In chapters seven and eight I considered how the socio-economic status of Tony’s family, and his mother’s position as a widow, shaped his interpretation of his time in the convent. Tony noted that his “way of believing” did not always fit with others in his community. Later in our interview Tony shared an experience of working with a different researcher who asked him questions about his time at the school, and Tony’s sense that that other researcher wanted him to say, “the convent was no good.”⁵ This led to a discussion about the stories people tell, “bullshitting,” and history generally. Finally Tony said, “But you have to go deeper huh, lots of that stuff, I always believe history is fifty percent bullshit myself, you?”⁶ I agreed with him, and he continued, “Yeah, it depends who you’re listening to huh. When they had the duel in Ile-a-la-Crosse, there’s eight different stories about it. But, there is always a Durocher there. A Durocher set it up. A Durocher shot the man, Durocher got shot. So I wrote one myself, so nine now. I made it up, [laughs]. So 100 years from now maybe my story will be the story.”⁷ This was how Tony set up returning to the story of the little Cat.

To Tony, history is subjective, varying according to the perspective, experience, and goals of the teller, views in accordance with those of social historians, oral historians, and ethnohistorians. I agreed with Tony, because I also believe that history is interpretation and that works of scholarship often fail to capture the varied lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. I

⁴ Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie, *Drumming from Within: Tales of Hope and Faith from Canada’s North* (Novalis, 2009), 62.

⁵ Tony Durocher, 9 November 2014.

⁶ Ibid. My work with Tony has most closely resembled a sustained conversation. While some scholars might question the validity of a person who admits to bullshitting, I understood our open conversation as indicative of our closer relationship. Exaggerations and made up stories are always possibilities (within oral and written sources), and being able to have a conversation with community members about how to evaluate stories suggests a level of trust and was an opportunity to better understand storytelling and oral history within the specific context of Ile-a-la-Crosse. I have found that bullshitting is the term local people use rather than evaluating oral traditions, oral footnoting, or protocols, and while not a typical academic term, it gets at similar concepts.

⁷ Ibid.

have attempted to engage with the “story before the story,” by speaking with a variety of community members and to take the perspectives and beliefs of those I have worked with seriously. Nonetheless, like the archbishop, I can only write what I have heard. My research is limited to the interviews that I personally conducted as well as earlier recountings and depictions of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak within the archival record and historical scholarship. Tony reminded me of the limits of scholarly work in depicting local experiences, and I am well aware that my research was not able to engage with all community perspectives. Furthermore, my decisions in the writing of this dissertation to focus on specific events and individuals have resulted in fragments of my collaboration with interlocutors like Tony being spread over multiple chapters. Despite my efforts to be more open about my research process, aspects of my initial conversations remain opaque. I have also interpreted what I have heard (and read), as I worked to bring at times contradictory local perspectives together. Some views of the school, like Tony’s, challenged my scholarly expectations. While I have tried to give space for Tony’s experience at the residential school, I call it a residential school (rather than the convent) and have given more weight to those who testified before Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Carolyn Bennett in their efforts to have the school recognized in chapter eight.

I only interviewed Patrick Daigneault once, but had camped with his family at Lac Ste. Anne in 2012 and 2013. The week before our formal interview we ran into each other at the family camp in Patuanak where Patrick was working with Rod Apeis to run a sweat lodge and share teachings with youth. Our interview focused on the work of Pat and his paternal family to continue practicing sweat lodges, and to bring these practices back into the open in Ile-a-la-Crosse. As I outlined in chapter seven, Patrick’s engagement with Catholicism has been complicated. He spoke of the damage done by the Church to Indigenous spirituality, and the challenges his family faced in trying to revitalize sweats in a community where at first many Catholics viewed the lodges as against their beliefs. He also described his time at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse as a time where his “whole world kind of flipped over,” a struggle where he was forced to speak English, pray a different way, and was taught to fear the strap. Like others of his generation, Pat described his mother has a “hardcore” Catholic. He also shared a story of his mother starting a family practice of beginning sweats with the Lord’s Prayer, and that even though some culturalists are adamantly against incorporating Catholic elements into sweats, he will often start his sweats by reciting the Lord’s Prayer in memory of his late mother. Our

interview ended with a discussion of Patrick's late father, Albert Daigneault, who used his teachings to heal people in ways that Pat described as miracles, leading to a discussion of aspects of Indigenous teachings that focused on connections to nature, the significance of belief, and the need to be open to possibilities.⁸

In many ways, Patrick's engagement with Catholicism differs from Tony; the two men had different experiences at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, likely relating to the differing family circumstances they had prior to entering the school and the difference between Tony's experiences attending in the early 1940s and Pat's during the mid 1960s. Unlike Tony, Patrick does not identify as a Catholic, though he noted that he respects other religious beliefs, and the beliefs of his mother continue to shape his practice of his spirituality, notably in his efforts to remember her. My goal throughout this dissertation has been to consider the range of ways that people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak historically and today have negotiated Catholicism and Indigeneity—including those who like Tony identify as Catholic, and those who like Patrick are not Catholic, but continue some practices to honour family members. My argument is that understandings of what it means to be Indigenous must include space for multiple experiences and perspectives, and the variety of ways that Indigenous people have and continue to negotiate Catholicism and Indigeneity. Furthermore, I suggest that even though Patrick is not a practicing Catholic, understanding his story and his family's efforts to revitalize sweat lodges in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak requires recognizing the Catholic histories of those communities.

Pat's emphasis on openness and possibility echo discussions by other community members about belief and the capacity for some community members, like Jacob Estralshenan, to recognize the truth in Indigenous stories and beliefs while identifying as a Catholic. Jacob's critique of priests for not believing in strong Dene medicine men is essentially that, unlike Dene people such as Jacob and his family, the priests were not open to the conversation of possibilities.⁹ Belief, or openness to possibilities, has been a theme throughout this dissertation from Jacob's observation in the first chapter, to belief in the miracles of Father Moraud and the Blessed Virgin Mary in chapters five and seven, to at times disbelief by Catholic Elders of abuse at the residential schools. Patrick's emphasis on openness and possibilities also resonated with me in terms of my methodologies, and again relates to my interpretation of Jacob's discussion of

⁸ Patrick Daigneault, 28 August 2014.

⁹ Jacob Estralshenan, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 21 August 2013.

belief that I considered in the first chapter. As a scholar seeking to take the metaphysical seriously, it is imperative that I too “come from a place of possibilities,” which I take to mean being open to stories of Father Moraud’s sainthood or the Blessed Virgin Mary appearing in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and to stories of powerful Dene medicine men like Crowhead and more recent Elders who can dance with trees. Taking these stories seriously in no way dismisses or negates the colonial and authoritarian nature of the Church as an institution in northwestern Saskatchewan, particularly in the residential schools at Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

My consideration of local historical consciousness of Catholicism in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse has focused on stories of individuals and events: Willow Heart; local responses to 1885; the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission; Father Louis Moraud; the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s; local efforts to revitalize sweat lodges; the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). Some of these events have been more meaningful to people in Patuanak or Ile-a-la-Crosse, while others are more regionally significant. In considering these events together, my work has identified some general trends within local historical consciousness that are almost always accompanied by exceptions. Generally I have found that the Metis, Cree, and Dene people living around Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse and along the Churchill River can be understood as belonging to a Catholic community. The power of the Church continued to grow in the region until the early 1970s when some local people in Ile-a-la-Crosse went against the Church and the Catholic community. Although people continued to go to church after the takeover, the community was divided and the role of the Church was forever altered. Whether this resistance to Church authority was uniquely local or part of the larger movement within the Catholic Church associated Vatican II is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Elders see a shift from their generation, where they belonged to the Catholic community not only by virtue of their birth and baptism, but also their faith and participation in weekly church services and sacraments, to today, when they see a decline in church attendance, with some, like Jacob Estralshenan, believing that when the Elders die the Catholic Church in Patuanak will cease to exist.¹⁰ Generally there is a trend of those belonging to Max Morin and Bernie Eaglechild’s generation, who were forced by their parents to go to church, baptizing their

¹⁰ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

own children but not forcing them to attend weekly Mass.¹¹ Their grandchildren are seen to have moved even further from the Church.¹² In this sense, while Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak continue to be described as Catholic communities, in some ways they are historically Catholic communities, differentiating them from earlier understandings of what it meant to be part of a Catholic community that included regular attendance at church. Amongst some community members there is a sense of older generations being “hardcore” or “diehard” Catholics, who refuse to criticize or go against the institution of the Church or the priests and bishops, a view that leads some to understand Catholicism as being deferential to Church authorities. Finally, today, some people practice aspects of Catholicism, like saying the Lord’s Prayer or attending the pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne, as more of a family tradition and way to remember Catholic parents and grandparents.

My work has complicated these general trends, finding both continuity and change in unexpected places, and emphasizing the significance of positionality and life history in informing the variety of ways that people have historically negotiated their understandings of Indigeneity and Catholicism, and what it means to belong to a Catholic Community. In every chapter I have found examples of community members resisting clerical authority and aspects of Roman Catholic dogma, though this was often done using Catholic teachings and as members of the Catholic community. Willow Heart challenged the priests in 1906, and during the 1940s and 1950s Mrs. Ahenakew, Noel Sandypoint, Alex Solomon, Abraham Misponas, and Thomas Wolverine challenged the authority of Father Moraud.¹³ In this way the takeover during the 1970s was not the first time local people challenged the authority of the Church, even though it was the most visibly successful, in part because the timing aligned with broader changes within the Catholic Church after Vatican II (even though that is not how events are framed within local historical consciousness). Unlike earlier acts of resistance to Church authority, the takeover in the 1970s was understood by some as being against the Catholic Church.

¹¹ Bernie Eaglechild, Interview with Amanda Fehr, English River First Nation, 13 February 2014; Max Morin, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 15 July 2014.

¹² Max Morin, 15 July 2014.

¹³ “Mrs A. Ahenakew to Rt. Rev. M Lajeunesse Lord Bishop of Keewatin,” Isle a la Crosse March 25th 1940, Patuanak, SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada; “Alex Solomon, Noel Sandypoint, and Abraham Misponas, Letter to Bishop Lajeunesse, The Pas” January 5th 1952, Patuanak, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada; “Thomas Wolverine letter to His Excellency Bishop P Dumouchel,” June 15th 1958, Patuanak SK, Patuanak SK Complaints 1933-1973. Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives. The Pas, Manitoba Canada.

Several of the Elders I have worked with, including Jacob Estralshenan and Tony Durocher, have more nuanced understandings of Catholicism than the label “hardcore Catholic” allows. For example, Elder Dorothy Dubrule noted her struggles with the Catholic Church, as well as her love of belonging to that community. She explained:

Don’t get me wrong, I love my Church, I love the fact that I am Catholic that I belong to the Catholic Church. I don’t have to agree with everything to love it, it’s like any relationship you have with anybody. You love the person, but there are some things about the person that you can do without, so it’s the same with my, with my relationship with my Church.¹⁴

In chapters seven and eight I considered Dorothy’s recognition of the damage done by the Church within her community, particularly her own family as well as Dorothy’s continuing belief and involvement in the Church. To Dorothy, belonging to a Catholic community includes space for struggle and disagreement, and she is able to differentiate her Catholic faith in God, Jesus, and the Blessed Virgin Mary from the institution of the Church. There are other Elders who have refused to accept that abuse occurred in residential schools, because of their differing understandings of what it means to be Catholic.¹⁵ In this way, even though there are multiple examples of Indigenous Catholics critiquing the authoritarianism of the Church, there are also examples of Elders in significant measure that equate Catholic faith with deference to Church authorities. I have found that some individuals’ personal experiences at residential schools, as well as the socioeconomic situation of their family prior to entering the schools, has shaped how they understand that part of their life and often how they relate to Catholicism and the Church. This too is more complicated, as some individuals who were deeply hurt at the schools have found healing in the Church, so it is not simply a matter of equating experiences of physical and or sexual abuse with leaving the Church. Due to variations within historical consciousness and the range of ways that local people have understood and engaged with Catholicism, I have focused on the concept of negotiating, and tried to draw attention to the range of local experiences, leaving room for ambiguity.

Although many Elders commented on the decline in church attendance, and shared fears that younger people do not pray and do not go to church, this dissertation does not include the perspectives of those younger people. Just like labeling Catholic Elders as “hardcore” can lose

¹⁴ Dorothy Dubrule, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 9 August 2013.

¹⁵ See for example, Sarazine Ratt, Interview with Amanda Fehr, Translated by Patrick D’Jonaire, English River First Nation, 25 June 2013; For discussions of Elders not believing stories of abuse see also: Max Morin, 15 July 2014; Bernie Eaglechild, 13 February 2014.

sight of the perspectives of those Elders, the generalization that young people are not Catholic potentially misses nuances in their experiences and understandings of Catholicism. Most of the people interviewed for this project were in their fifties or older. I have spent time with younger people in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, who have continued to baptize their babies, go to Lac Ste. Anne with family members, have sent their children to Catholic summer camp, known who Father Moraud was, and have mentioned stories about their grandparents faith even though they do not attend church on Sundays. In this way, Catholicism continues to be a part of their historical consciousness, though their understandings of Catholicism likely differ from earlier generations.

This dissertation contributes to a growing, but still marginalized sub-field of Indigenous Christianity,¹⁶ by shifting from a focus on conversion or Christianization to what comes after and focusing on Indigenous historical consciousness of Catholicism during the twentieth century. It also complicates a regional historiography by more thoroughly considering the Church as a colonial agent and how both the role of the Church as a provider of relief and the legitimate faith of local people added to the power of the Church.¹⁷ I have further demonstrated the continued significance of Catholicism during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries amidst efforts at decolonization and reconciliation, areas of academic study that typically ignore Indigenous Christianity or position Christianity in opposition to Indigeneity.¹⁸

More significantly, this work contributes to a rich body of scholarship such as that by John Lutz, Keith Carlson, Philip Deloria, Susan Neylan, Rob Innes, Julie Cruikshank, and Leslie

¹⁶ See for example: Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005); Laura Peers, "'The Guardian of All: Jesuit Missionary and Salish Perception of the Virgin Mary,'" in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2nd edition., edited by Jennifer S. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003); Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History*, second edition (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012); *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, edited by Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

¹⁷ David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Robert Jarvenpa, "The Development of Pilgrimage in an inter- cultural frontier," in *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition* (New York: University Press of America, 1990); Miguel Astor-Aguilera and Robert Jarvenpa. "Comparing Indigenous Pilgrimages: Devotion, Identity, and Resistance in Mesoamerica and North America," *Anthropos*, Vol. 103. 2. (2008), pp. 482-506.

¹⁸ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014).

Robertson, who focusing on people from other geographies have been complicating understandings of Indigeneity to consider the variety of ways that Indigenous people encounter and at times engage with colonial systems.¹⁹ In this way, my work recognizes the damage of colonialism as well as cultural genocide to the Indigenous communities I have worked with, as well as local agency and the legitimacy of Indigenous Catholic identities. While I recognize that belonging to the Catholic Church was at times politically expedient and beneficial for Indigenous people in northwest Saskatchewan, I also recognize the significance of Catholic beliefs historically and today. In this way, my work complicates earlier scholarship that has sought to revitalize Indigenous Christians during the twentieth century by ahistorically focusing on their Indigeneity at the expense of their Christianity.²⁰ In contrast, Catholicism often shaped the local historical consciousness of the community members I worked with, notably affecting how some understood Willow Heart, Father Moraud, the school takeover, the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the IRSSA. Indeed, critiques made by people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse of the Church and priests like Father Moraud were often based on Catholic principles. Based on this work, I suggest that scholarly understandings of Indigeneity, or what it means to be Indigenous, must make space for Indigenous Christians.

Building on the recent revisionist scholarship of Metis studies scholar and sociologist Chris Andersen's critiques of racialized definitions of Metis as "mixed," I have critiqued the treatment of those labeled as Metis by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in *Volume Three* of their final report.²¹ I argue *Volume Three* provides racialized narratives of

¹⁹ See for example, Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Robertson and the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*; Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Keith Carlson, "Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon." In *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts* Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Phillip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (University Press of Kansas, 2004); Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013); Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*.

²⁰ Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu'l Gixsam, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*; Tasha Beeds, "Rethinking Edward Ahenakew's Intellectual Legacy: Expressions of Nêhiyawî-mâmitonêyihcikan (Cree Consciousness or Thinking), in *Mixed Blessings*.

²¹ Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools. The Métis Experience : The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume 3* (Kingston: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

those it considers “mixed” Metis Christians whose experiences at unrecognized schools are depicted as less-than those of students who attended recognized schools. More generally I suggest that the tendency for scholars to dismiss Indigenous Christianity, particularly in the twentieth century, relates to such racialized notions of “mixing” that result in Indigenous Christians being seen as less authentic and less Indigenous. While seeing Christianity as oppositional to Indigeneity is a view that some of the people I interviewed held, I suggest that scholars need to create space for multiple understandings and experiences of Indigeneity. Here, I am by no means attempting to define Indigeneity, but arguing that acknowledging Indigenous Christianity, particularly within the context of the history of residential schools should not be a dismissal of the violence experienced at those schools but rather a necessity for scholars to more fully understand the experiences of Indigenous students from Christian Indigenous communities. More space is needed for the variety of experiences of Indigenous Christians, past and present, to be included in the academic study of Indigenous history.

My final historiographical contribution is in the comparative aspect that includes Cree, Metis, and Dene perspectives answering scholarly calls for a study cutting across the lines of Indian status that have tended to define academic work.²² By considering both Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, I have drawn attention to the continuing significance of kinship within the region as well as the effects of the Treaty/Scrip Commission of 1906 as a point of division. Notably, women gained and lost status as they married into other regional communities, maintaining kinship connections in the face of a hardening sense of distinctions between Metis and status communities. In addition to kinship, Catholicism and the notion of a Catholic community has also served to connect families and communities otherwise separated by cultural and status differences. The Treaty/Scrip Commission of 1906 has at times resulted in differing community experiences and historical consciousness along status lines. Some local people in Ile-a-la-Crosse have worked to connect to broader histories of the Metis Nation that focus on Red River and Louis Riel, even though their local stories at times conflicts with these national narratives. My work suggests the need for a more detailed regional study that encompasses the watershed from Pinehouse to La Loche. In particular, more scholarly work is needed to consider the experience of

²² J.R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” in *Reflections of Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 51-52; Andersen, “*Métis*,” pp.18, 204-207.

women who have been excluded by a scholarship that has focused on male-dominated political economies.

My work also makes methodological contributions to Indigenous research methodologies, oral history, and ethnohistory, in its efforts to be more open about my research process—particularly the relational aspects that tend to remain opaque in scholarship.²³ There was a significant range in the relationships, and lack of relationships, that I developed with the people with whom I have worked. While my work with Elders like Tony Durocher and Eliza Aubichon has approached the methodological goal of sustained conversations,²⁴ significant parts of this dissertation are based on interviews with individuals who I met with only once or twice. Additionally, many of what I consider my most significant sustained conversations with community members have not resulted in formal interviews, and are therefore not reflected in quotations even though these relationships have fundamentally informed whom I have worked with and my analysis of that work. Even with these limits in terms of long-term conversations with community members, my work has still benefited from oral historians' calls to situate interviewee's information within their life history. In addition to my descriptions of my work with community members in the text, a more detailed description is included in Appendix A.

Despite my goals to be more open about my process, there have been aspects of my work that I have hesitated to write about. I do not want to inadvertently hurt someone in the community by detailing my perspectives about misunderstandings or use my recountings of the process as a means to leverage my scholarly and academic authority. As such, I have chosen to be more transparent about the community engagement process that is fundamentally informing the creation of the interviews that this work relies upon and my analysis of those interviews.

²³ In particular see: Steven High ed., *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999); Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson, "Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part 3: The Social Relations of Oral History." *Saskatchewan History*. vol. 51, no. 2 (1999): 29-35; Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007); Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Blackpoint N.C.: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996); Julie Cruikshank, With Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990); Julie Carlson, *The Power of Place; Julie Cruikshank, Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

²⁴ See for example Henry Greenspan, "Afterword," in Steven High ed., *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*; Leslie Robertson and the Kwagw̓ Gixsam, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*.

Community engaged work extends far beyond the context of an interview, and in the context of relationships the interview is of lesser significance. In essence though, it is through excerpts from the text of those interviews that those reading this dissertation are primarily engaging with the people of Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

The historical consciousness shared with me took place within the specific contexts of an interview with an outside researcher, and at times less formal settings where my role as an outsider and varying relationships with local people would have continued to shape what was communicated. My recountings of interviews and relationships with community members are from my perspective. Beyond our interviews, the time I have spent afterwards transcribing and reflecting on my conversations with community members has likely influenced my interpretations of my work with community members—work that may have been more foundational and profound for me than for those I have worked with. In my efforts to be more transparent about my research process, I have distinguished the voices of those I interviewed from my interpretation and analysis, resulting in lengthier block quotes.

The work remains incomplete, as the processes written about are ongoing—particularly issues around the exclusion of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the IRSSA. Regardless of whether or not the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse is recognized in the future, how local people in Patuanak and Ile-a-la-Crosse make sense of their history of Catholicism will continue and change over time. Even in the midst of change, it is important to recognize the significance of 170 years of Catholic history in northwest Saskatchewan within local historical consciousness, and that for many Elders, Catholicism was a significant, if complicated, part of their lives and beliefs. As Jacob explained, “It [Catholicism] was our lives. That was what we believed. Maybe it’s right or maybe it’s wrong, I don’t know, nobody knows, nobody’s seen it.”²⁵

²⁵ Jacob Estralshenan, 21 August 2013.

Appendix A

Eliza Aubichon, nee Daigneault was born on February 7th 1934. Her parents were William Daigneault and Margaret Kyplain. She grew up at Tsatsigamik on the Beaver River. Her Father William was known for his large garden. He also participated in sweat lodges held in a secret location. Eliza attended the school at Ile-a-la-Crosse for ten years from 1941-1951. When she was sixteen she married a Dene man from Patuanak. Sarazine Ratt was Eliza's sister-in-law. Eliza has lived in Ile-a-la-Crosse since the 1970s. I met Eliza through the Ile-a-la-Crosse community-mapping project in 2010 and spent time with her at Lac Ste. Anne. I formally interviewed her twice, but we have visited many other times.

Buckley Belanger is currently the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Athabasca, and is a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP). I have met with Buckley about the exclusion of the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), and he shared some of his own experiences of attending the Ile-a-la-Crosse school with me. I didn't record our conversation, but Buckley considered it on the record. Buckley was involved in organizing the gathering about the school question in March of 2015 that I attended.

Clément (Clem) Chartier is currently the president of the Métis National Council. He was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse and grew up in Buffalo Narrows. He attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I interviewed him once about politics in northwestern Saskatchewan during the 1970s and the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse School from the IRSSA. Clem attended Prime Minister Harper's apology in 2008 with Don Favel.

Marie Adele Daigneault lives in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I interviewed her twice: once about the pilgrimages she has been on (to Guadalupe and Lourdes) and the second time with her parents Victoria and Daniel Daigneault where she acted as a translator.

Patrick (Pat) Daigneault was born in 1959 and raised at the mouth of the Beaver River by his paternal grandparents (William and Margaret Daigneault) before being sent to residential school. Patrick learned about sweat lodges and traditional spirituality from his grandfather William who he describes as a herbalist and a medicine man and his father Albert. Patrick's father Albert Daigneault (Eliza's brother) worked to bring sweat lodges back into the open in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s. Pat described his mother Marie Louise as a "hardline" Catholic. Patrick has followed in his grandfather and father's footsteps. He was living in Prince Albert Saskatchewan when I formally interviewed him in 2014. I only formally interviewed Pat once, but had spent time with him and his wife Patsy camping at Lac Ste. Anne with the Durocher/Daigneault camp 2012 and 2013.

Doris Desjarlais was born on April 29th 1949 in Ile-a-la-Crosse. She later lived in the Elizabeth Metis Settlement in Alberta. I interviewed her once in 2006 with her sister Liz Durocher about the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the farm outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2002. Doris described being healed of her cancer. She passed away in 2009.

Irene Desjarlais, nee Johnson grew up at Halfway Lake (halfway between Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak) before being sent to the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Irene was involved in the temporary school committee during the 1970s in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I met with Irene and her husband Ovide several times to discuss the old days, fiddle music and dancing, Catholicism, and the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I formally interviewed Irene and Ovide twice for this project. Irene passed away in the summer of 2015. Irene's father was Nap Johnson who was interviewed during the 1970s by the Department of Northern Services.

Ovide Desjarlais was born in Beauval in 1930 to Francois Desjarlais and Flavie Durocher. Ovide's father worked at the Beauval Indian Residential School. In 1945, when Ovide was fifteen the family left Beauval and moved to the Island behind Big Island on Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse. Ovide fondly remembered his time in Beauval. I first met Ovide in 2010 with the community-mapping project. I later met with him and his wife Irene on several topics including music and dance, the old days, and Catholicism. I formally interviewed Ovide and Irene twice for this project. I also interviewed Ovide's sister Leonie Durocher and his cousin Tony Durocher.

Barbara (Barb) Flett (nee Desjarlais) is Ovide and Irene's daughter. I interviewed her twice. Our first interview was about her trip to Rome for the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. Our second interview was with her parents Ovide and Irene and included a discussion of the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s (when Barb was a student there).

Dorothy Dubrule (nee Morin) was born in 1951 to Georgina and Jimmy Morin. Dorothy was raised by one of her sisters until she was three or four and then lived with another family for a couple of years before living with her parents. When she was seven years old she went to the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Dorothy has five older brothers, and she discussed her brothers Frank and Jeff in our conversations about the Church. Dorothy has served as a lay minister in Ile-a-la-Crosse for many years and is currently working as an Elder in the school. I have interviewed Dorothy multiple times since 2006 including two interviews about Catholicism, the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and her faith for this project.

Jim Durocher was born and raised in Ile-a-la-Crosse and attended the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force before he was quite old enough and later spent some time in Bellingham Washington at university. He moved back to Ile-a-la-Crosse where he married Leonie Desjarlais. After working in conservation and other jobs for a few years Jim got into politics working closely with Jim Sinclair and Howard Adams of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan. Jim was involved in the take over of the school during the 1970s. He later served as president of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan during the 1990s. Most recently he has been chairing the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school survivors committee and working to have that school recognized. I have interviewed Jim a couple of times about different projects including fiddle music and dancing, the takeover during the 1970s, and with his wife Leonie about her trip to Brother Andre's Cathedral in Montreal.

Leonie Durocher was born on January 12th 1943 to Francois Desjarlais and Flavie Durocher. She grew up on the Island behind Big Island before going to school at the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. She married Jim Durocher. When we met in 2012 Leonie shared with me about her trip to Brother Andre's Cathedral in Montreal. Leonie had cancer and the trip was an effort at

healing. Leonie also shared memories of going on Guadalupe with other women from the community. Leonie passed away on July 16th 2014.

Liz Durocher is from Ile-a-la-Crosse. I first met Liz in 2006 when I interviewed her and her sister about appearances of the Virgin Mary at the farm outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse. I connected with Liz again in 2010 and interviewed her about her work leading the local Metis dance group. Since then I have spent time with Liz and her family, travelling to Lac Ste. Anne with them in 2012 and 2013. Liz has been a friend and mentor to me throughout this process.

Tony Durocher was born in Beauval. His father was from Beauval and his mother from Dipper Lake. Tony's mother was widowed when Tony was young and Tony went to live with a foster family along the Beaver River. Tony attended a year of school in Beauval and then began school at the convent in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1941. Tony worked on road crews in northern Saskatchewan and in the territories. He later owned his own taxi business, the first in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Tony's wife Vicky (*Nesus*) passed away before I met Tony. I first met Tony in 2010 through the community-mapping project. Since then we have had many interviews and conversations on a range of topics including fiddle music and dancing, place names, Tony's working history, bullshitting, the school takeover in the 1970s and Catholicism. Tony has relatives in Patuanak (including Ralph Paul). Leonie Durocher and Ovide Desjarlais are his cousins.

Bernice (Bernie) Eaglechild was a Band Councilor when I began my work with English River First Nation. Bernie was at the first meeting I had with Chief and Council and signed my Memorandum of Understanding for this project. I formally interviewed Bernie once about Catholicism in her community. She contrasted her views and understandings of the past based on her experiences at Beauval Indian Residential School (BIRS) and in university (while taking education) with those of her mother Christine George (who was 82 at the time of my interview with Bernie in 2013). Bernie grew up at Primeau Lake until her family moved to Patuanak when she was five. She was sent to BIRS when she was six years old, and attended the school for nine years.

Jacob Estralshenan was born on February 6th 1926 in Dipper Lake Saskatchewan. His parents were John Est and Josephine Jackfish. He was raised by his maternal grandparents Norbert and Sarah Bell and was later sent to Beauval Indian Residential School. Jacob worked on the trap lines. He knew old stories of Dene and Cree medicine men that he learned from his grandfather. Several people in Patuanak recommended that I interview Jacob. I was able to formally interview him twice, though I lost the recording of our second interview. Jacob had been interviewed before and his knowledge was included in the Meadow Lake Tribal Council collection and *In Their Own Land* by Peter Dodson. Jacob passed away on January 14th 2015.

Don Favel was one of the political leaders in Ile-a-la-Crosse when I was first introduced to the community in 2006. I interviewed Don in 2006 about the Catholic Church, sweat lodges, and appearances of the Virgin Mary. I met Don again in 2010 when he spoke at a community gathering about the exclusion of the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from the IRSSA. Don had attended Prime Minister Harper's apology for Canada's involvement in the Indian Residential School system in 2008. Don played a leadership role in advocating for Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school survivors until his passing on June 19th 2010 at age 61. Don Favel's

brothers were Jim and Jonas Favel who I discuss in chapters six and seven. Duane Favel is Don's nephew.

Duane Favel has been the mayor of Ile-a-la-Cross throughout my doctoral work with the community. He is the son of Jim and Marie Favel, and the nephew of Don Favel. Duane was in elementary school during the school takeover in Ile-a-la-Crosse in the 1970s. His father was involved in Metis politics in the community at that time, and his mother identified as a churchgoer. Duane later became a high school teacher in Saskatoon before returning to the community. I have formally interviewed Duane twice, once about drama in Ile-a-la-Crosse and the second time for my doctoral research.

Marie Favel (nee Durocher) was born in Beauval. I met Marie in 2006 when I interviewed her about appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary and prayer. Marie described herself as a churchgoer, but has also worked with her husband to bring sweat lodges to Ile-a-la-Crosse. My first interview with Marie took place in a sweat lodge. I interviewed Marie again in 2013 about the takeover of the school in the 1970s. She was working as an Elder at the elementary school at that time and our interview took place in the school. Marie and her husband's seemingly different positions during the school take over has been written about by Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie in his book *Drumming from Within*. I was unable to interview Marie's husband Jim for this project because of his health.

Agnes Gardiner (nee Roy) was born on January 9th 1932. She grew up at Halfway Lake (halfway between Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak, and took catechism with Father Moraud in Patuanak. I interviewed Agnes twice in 2014. I had previously interviewed her son Leon Gardiner in 2006 about his encounters with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Agnes passed away on Wednesday March 11th 2015.

Mary Lariviere was born at Knee Lake on August 7th 1929. Her parents were Noel and Sophie Sandypoint. Her father, Noel, was the chief of English River during the 1950s when Father Moraud was alive. Mary attended Beauval Indian Residential School for eight years. I interviewed Mary three times (twice with translators and once without) and spent some additional time with her at community gatherings in Patuanak. She spoke about the difficulties in her life and tragedies and the significance of her faith in coping with the loss of her husband of 57 years and four out of her eleven children. Mary shared several pictures with me that are included in this dissertation.

Matilda Lariviere was born on May 31st 1935. She grew up at Dipper Lake and currently lives in Patuanak. Matilda makes hides and turns them into Mitts and moccasins that she beads. I met with Matilda a couple of times, including an afternoon watching and attempting to help her with hide-making. I interviewed Matilda with Grandma Bébé Ratt, with Matilda acting as translator.

Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie was born on April 22 1947. He first arrived in Ile-a-la-Crosse as a scholastic brother in 1972. He was ordained to the priesthood as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate in 1974. He served as the Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas from March 25th 2006 to July 16th 2012. Archbishop Lavoie wrote about the takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 1970s in his book *Drumming From Within: Tales of Hope and Faith From Canada's North*. I

interviewed the archbishop once in the summer of 2014 about that event as well as Catholicism in the northwest more generally.

Frank McIntyre was born on August 3rd 1922, and grew up at Dipper Lake. He was the Chief of the English River First Nation from 1965-1969 and was responsible for initiating significant development in Patuanak following the death of Father Moraud. I interviewed Frank twice for this project. There was some confusion during our first interview as Frank initially thought I was a health student. Frank been interviewed before: he worked with anthropologist during the 1970s acting as a guide for some of Jarvenpa's ethnoarcheological work in 1979. Frank's stories are also included in an article by Graham Guest, the MLTC collection, and in *In Their Own Land* by Peter Dodson. Frank passed away on September 30th 2015.

Margaret McIntyre currently lives in Patuanak. She attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Margaret acted as a translator for one of my interviews with Mary Lariviere. I interviewed Margaret once.

Georgina Morin was born on May 10th 1924. She got married at a young age and had her first child when she was fifteen. She had seven children (Dorothy Dubrule was her youngest). I interviewed Georgina in 2006 about the appearances of the Virgin Mary at the farm outside of Ile-a-la-Crosse and pilgrimages. Georgina passed away on September 3rd 2008.

Max Morin was the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2006. When I interviewed him in 2014 he was working for the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Max attended the residential school in Ile-a-la-Crosse from 1956 to the early 1960s. Max's father was Vital Morin, a veteran of WWII and a leader in the community takeover of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. I interviewed Max about his dad's role in the takeover, as well as Max's knowledge of the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission, Willow Heart, Catholicism in the region, and the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRSSA. Max's mother was Therase Desjarlais, who married Vital at the centennial of the Ile-a-la-Crosse mission in 1946. Max testified before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1992, and I included part of his testimony in this dissertation.

Ralph Paul was born in the wintertime on the west side of Haultain Lake. He was baptized in Patuanak as Raphael Victor Paul. He was sent to the Beauval Indian Residential School when he was six years old in 1944 and attended the school for ten years. He went on to attend high school in North Battleford and at Lebreton, and then teachers college. He was the Chief of English River First Nation from 2007 to 2011, and currently lives in Winnipeg. Chief Paul has written about his experiences at BIRS as well as his knowledge of the history of Patuanak in his memoir. Chief Paul explains in his memoir that he is no longer a practicing Catholic. I was able to meet with Chief Paul in Winnipeg in 2014. At that time he shared a copy of his unpublished manuscript with me.

Sarazine Ratt (nee Aubichon) was born on June 13th 1912 at Knee Lake. Her parents were Annie and Charles Aubichon. As the oldest resident in Patuanak, several people recommended that I interview Sarazine, known as Grandma Bébé. Grandma Bébé spoke Dene, Cree, French, Latin, and English, though preferred to speak in Dene for our interviews. She knew how to write in syllabics, which she had taught at St. Louis School in Patuanak. She assisted Father Moraud

when he was alive and he told her that she would have a long life. Our interviews focused on stories of Willow Heart and Father Moraud. During our first interview Patrick D’Jonaire acted as a translator, and for the second, Matilda Lariviere translated. I briefly met with Grandma Ratt a couple of other times when her sister-in-law Eliza Aubichon was visiting her. Grandma Bébé passed away on September 8th 2016.

Ovide Wolverine was born at Cree Lake in 1938 and was baptized by Father Moraud. His parents were Martin Wolverine and Albertine Jackfish. His paternal grandfather was Thomas Wolverine. His family lived at Dipper Lake. Ovide attended Beauval Indian Residential School. When he came out of the he fished and trapped and also went south to work. He got married in 1968 to his wife Yvonne. During the 1970s he worked for English River Education when they were building St. Louis school in Patuanak. I only interviewed Ovide once. Our conversation covered a range of topics from Father Moraud to Willow Heart, to Catholicism in the community today.

Appendix B

This study, originally titled “Nations Transformed?: Continuity and Change in Aboriginal Histories of Christianity” was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BEH# 11-149). I also signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Village of Ile-a-la-Crosse and the English River Dene Nation. Copies of those MOUs and sample consent forms are included here.

Nations Transformed: Continuity and Change in Aboriginal Histories of Christianity

Research Agreement

[April 2012]

Amanda Fehr (PhD Candidate at the University of Saskatchewan) agrees to conduct the named research project with the following understandings:

1. The purpose of this dissertation research is to build on earlier work I conducted for the Métis of the Westside Historical Atlas, to explore more broadly the history of Christianity during the 20th century from community perspectives.
2. This project will take place over the next two years wherein I will conduct oral interviews with interested community members, complete archival research, and write my dissertation.
3. The methods to be used, as agreed by the community and myself are: semi-structured oral interviews. Participants will receive copies of the interviews and be given the option to review transcripts and drafts of chapters relating to information they have shared. Following community protocols, I will give participants small homemade gifts or tobacco (if preferred). I plan to meet with participants more than once, to give them a chance to get to know me and to keep them updated regarding the project. All efforts will be made to incorporate and address participant concerns and recommendations at each step of the project.
4. Information collected is to be shared, distributed, and stored in these agreed ways: Participants will receive copies of their interviews. With their permission I will leave copies of the interviews at the town library and or a place of their choice. Following University of Saskatchewan ethics guidelines, copies of interviews will be kept at the University by my supervisor Keith Carlson helping to ensure that participants and their family members will have access to additional copies of their interview(s) long after I graduate. Final copies of my dissertation will be available online through the U of S library. I will make paper copies of the dissertation and any resultant publications available to participants and the town library. I am interested in giving a community and or school presentation to share my findings.
6. Informed consent of individual participants is to be obtained in these agreed ways: Following University of Saskatchewan ethics guidelines, participants will be asked to sign a consent form after we have gone over it together. The form will be left with the participant with contact

information for myself, my supervisor, and the University Ethics Board. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the completion of my dissertation.

8. Project progress will be communicated to the participants and community in these agreed ways: I will update participants and community leaders during visits to Ile-a-la-Crosse, and through email or phone calls between visits. All participants will have my contact information and can contact me at anytime to ask questions about the project.

9. I wish to use this research for my dissertation, but it is also likely to be included in conference presentations and publications (journal articles and a book). I will keep the participants apprised of future projects resulting from this research and (as noted above) provide the community with copies of relevant publications.

Signed by:

Date:

Date:

Community:

Amanda Fehr

PhD Candidate, Department of History, University of
Saskatchewan

Duane Favel

Mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse

Nations Transformed: Continuity and Change in Aboriginal Histories of Christianity

Research Agreement

[22 October 2012]

Amanda (Mandy) Fehr (PhD Candidate at the University of Saskatchewan) agrees to conduct the named research project with the following understandings:

1. The purpose of this research is to begin building relationships with members of the English River First Nation, and to conduct interviews to explore the history of Christianity during the 20th century from community perspectives. This will form a part of my larger dissertation about Aboriginal Christianity and Politics during the 20th Century in Northwestern Saskatchewan.
2. This project will take place over the next two years wherein I will conduct oral interviews with interested community members, complete archival research, and write my dissertation.
3. The methods to be used, as agreed by the community and myself are: semi-structured oral interviews. Participants will receive copies of the interviews and be given the option to review transcripts and drafts of chapters relating to information they have shared. I will give participants small homemade gifts. I plan to meet with participants more than once, to give them a chance to get to know me and to keep them updated regarding the project. All efforts will be made to incorporate and address participant concerns and recommendations at each step of the project.
4. Information collected is to be shared, distributed, and stored in these agreed ways: Participants will receive copies of their interviews. With their permission I will leave copies of the interviews with the Band Office, at the St. Louis School Library, and or a place of their choice. Following University of Saskatchewan ethics guidelines, copies of interviews will be kept at the University by my supervisor Keith Carlson (306-966-5902 or keith.carlson@usask.ca) helping to ensure that participants and their family members will have access to additional copies of their interview(s) long after I graduate. Final copies of my dissertation will be available online through the U of S library. I will make paper copies of the dissertation and any resultant publications available to participants, the Chief and Council of the ERFN, and to the St. Louis School Library. I am interested in giving community and or school presentations to share my findings throughout the process.
5. Informed consent of individual participants is to be obtained in these agreed ways: Following University of Saskatchewan ethics guidelines, participants will be asked to sign a consent form after we have gone over it together. The form will be left with the participant with contact information for myself, my supervisor, and the University Ethics

Board. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the completion of my dissertation.

6. Project progress will be communicated to the participants and community in these agreed ways: I will update participants and the Chief and Council designated representative during visits, and through email or phone calls between visits. All participants will have my contact information and can contact me at anytime to ask questions about the project.


7. I wish to use this research for my dissertation, but it is also likely to be included in conference presentations and publications (journal articles and a book). I will keep the participants apprised of future projects resulting from this research and (as noted above) provide the English River First Nation with copies of relative publications.


8. As a student and a researcher at the University of Saskatchewan I am required to follow University of Saskatchewan Ethics Guidelines. While this agreement is between myself and the Chief and Council both my supervisor (Keith Carlson) and the University ethics board may be contacted if questions or concerns arise. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (23 March 2012). Any questions regarding the rights of participants may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (306-966-2084). My supervisor Keith Carlson (306-966-5902 or keith.carlson@usask.ca) may also be contacted throughout the process and after.

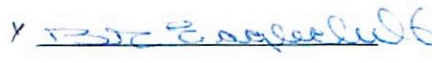
Signed by:

Date:

Date:


Amanda Fehr
PhD Candidate, Department of History,
University of Saskatchewan


Chief Alfred Dawatsare,
English River First Nation


Councilor Bernadette Eaglechild
English River First Nation

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Nations Transformed?: Continuity and Change in Aboriginal Histories of Christianity” Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher(s):

Amanda Fehr, PhD Candidate, History Department, College of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Saskatchewan. (306) 230-0023 (Cell phone) or (306) 966-2511 (office phone number), abf948@mail.usask.ca (email).

Supervised by Professor Keith Thor Carlson, Associate Professor, History Department, University of Saskatchewan. (306) 966-5902. Keith.carlson@usask.ca (email).

Purpose and Procedure:

The purpose of this study is look at the intersections of religious and political expression during the twentieth century in your community, paying special attention to the various roles of Christianity. I would like to listen to your thoughts and memories about particular events in your community as well as your views on the relationships between politics and religion in the past and today.

The material from your interview will be used in my dissertation and may also be presented at conferences and published. There is also a possibility that direct quotations will be used from your interview. With your permission, copies of our interview will be given to a local library or archives.

Potential Benefits: The benefits of this work will be a deeper understanding of the relationship between politics and religion during the 20th century; these benefits may or may not occur depending on what information I find, and how successful I am in disseminating it.

Potential Risks:

There are risks that the stories shared with me will be controversial in nature and may represent views that others will disagree with. There is also a risk that I may present information in a way that is not agreeable to you as the participant. There will be an opportunity to make changes, if you wish, at the end of the interview, or at anytime throughout this process. If you would like a copy of our interview or to review transcripts of it, please indicate this under the **conditions** section. Please feel free not to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and end the interview at any time you wish. No explanation is necessary. In case our discussion today triggers upsetting memories, I will leave you with information about local counseling options.

Storage of Data:

My supervisor Professor Keith Carlson, at the University of Saskatchewan, will safely store interview recordings and notes for the next five years. Copies of the interviews will also be available at the local library/archives of your choice with your permission. Copies of our interview will be made available to you in a timely matter.

Confidentiality: Participants may be identifiable based on what they have said due to the fact that they are being drawn from a small community. If you wish to remain as anonymous as possible, please do not use any identifying information during the recorded interview. If any direct quotations are used from your interview you may be given a pseudonym and identifying information will be removed from my report. However, it is possible that you will still be identifiable to other people based on what you have said, and anonymity cannot be guaranteed. If you would like the

opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and to add, change, or delete information please let me know at any time prior to the dissemination of my results.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in confidence, and in accordance with your wishes. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the research project, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the results have been disseminated in my dissertation. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Support Services:

In the event that you experience a negative emotional response as a result of participating in the study, the following support services are available free of charge 24 hours a day.

Northern Crisis Line: (collect) (306) 425-4090

Questions:

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me or my supervisor at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (23 March 2012). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (306-966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Conditions:

☐ None

☐ _____

☐ Please leave a copy of my interview at _____

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Researcher)

My interviews tended to be semi-structured or unstructured, depending on the interview and the flow of conversation. I prepared general questions about the varying events related to this dissertation. Some interviewees would simply talk after learning of my topic or would need relatively little direction; others required more questions on my part and the interviews were more structured questions followed by shorter answers. Some of my interviews focused on a particular event, while others covered several. Time and the detail that community members provided was the determinant of this. I typically began interviews by asking the interviewee to tell me about their personal history (where they were born, and information about their parents and grandparents). Some additional sample questions are included here:

- Could you tell me a little about yourself? Who your parents and grandparents were, where you were born, where you grew up etc.?
- What role has the church and Catholicism played in your own life? In your parents' lives? Grandparents' lives?
- What do you consider the relationship between politics and the Church in the northwest to be historically? Today?
- What is the role of the Church in your community today?
- What is the role of religion in your community today?

More specific foci depended on the person I was interviewing and the community they belonged to. Some general discussion points included:

- Do you know any stories about Willow Heart?
- What about the role of the Church in the 1906 Treaty/Scrip Commission in northwest Saskatchewan?
- Do you have any memories of Father Moraud?
- I heard that some people thought Father Moraud was strict, what do you think?
- Could you tell me about the take over of the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse during the 70s?
- I've heard that it was a pretty divisive time- what are your thoughts?
- What is the significance/legacy of that event today?
- Could you speak about the Marian shrines in the region or the appearances of Mary in the northwest?
- What do you think about PM Harper's apology for residential schools?
- Could you tell me about the exclusion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse school from the IRS settlement?
- Do you know what is being done by people in the northwest in response to that exclusion?

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Museum and Archives Abbreviations

Canadian Museum of History Archives (CMHA)

Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI)

Glenbow Archives

Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

University of Saskatchewan Archives

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